

トライア

～竜騎士への道～

1 わい

Wai



Dragoon

Arc 1

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Novel Updates

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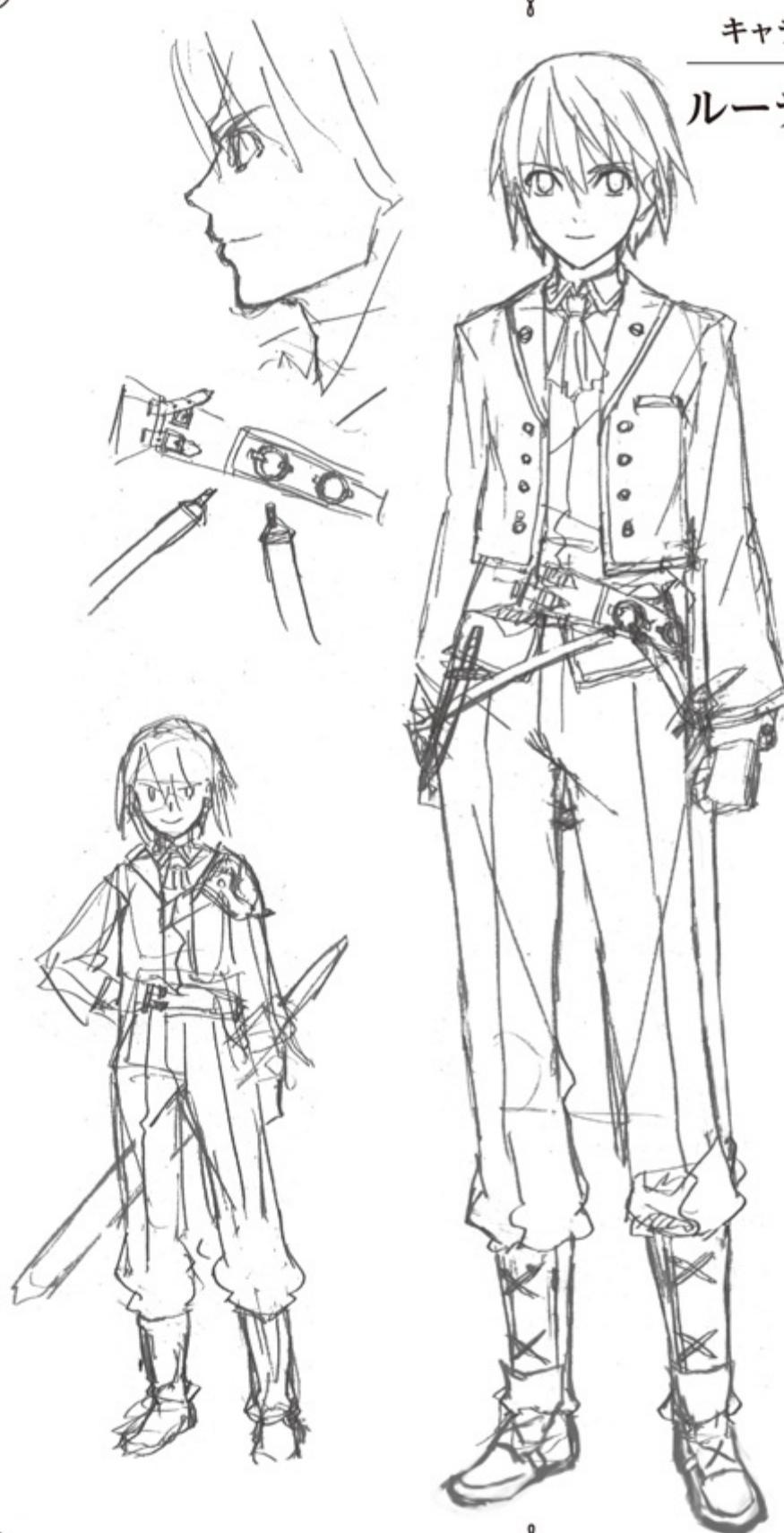




左手の風の魔法でアレイストの魔法剣の軌道を変え、
そのまま右手の本命である魔法をアレイストにぶつける！

キャラクターデザイン案

ルーデル・アルセス



キャラクターデザイン案

アレイスト・ハーディ



キャラクターデザイン案

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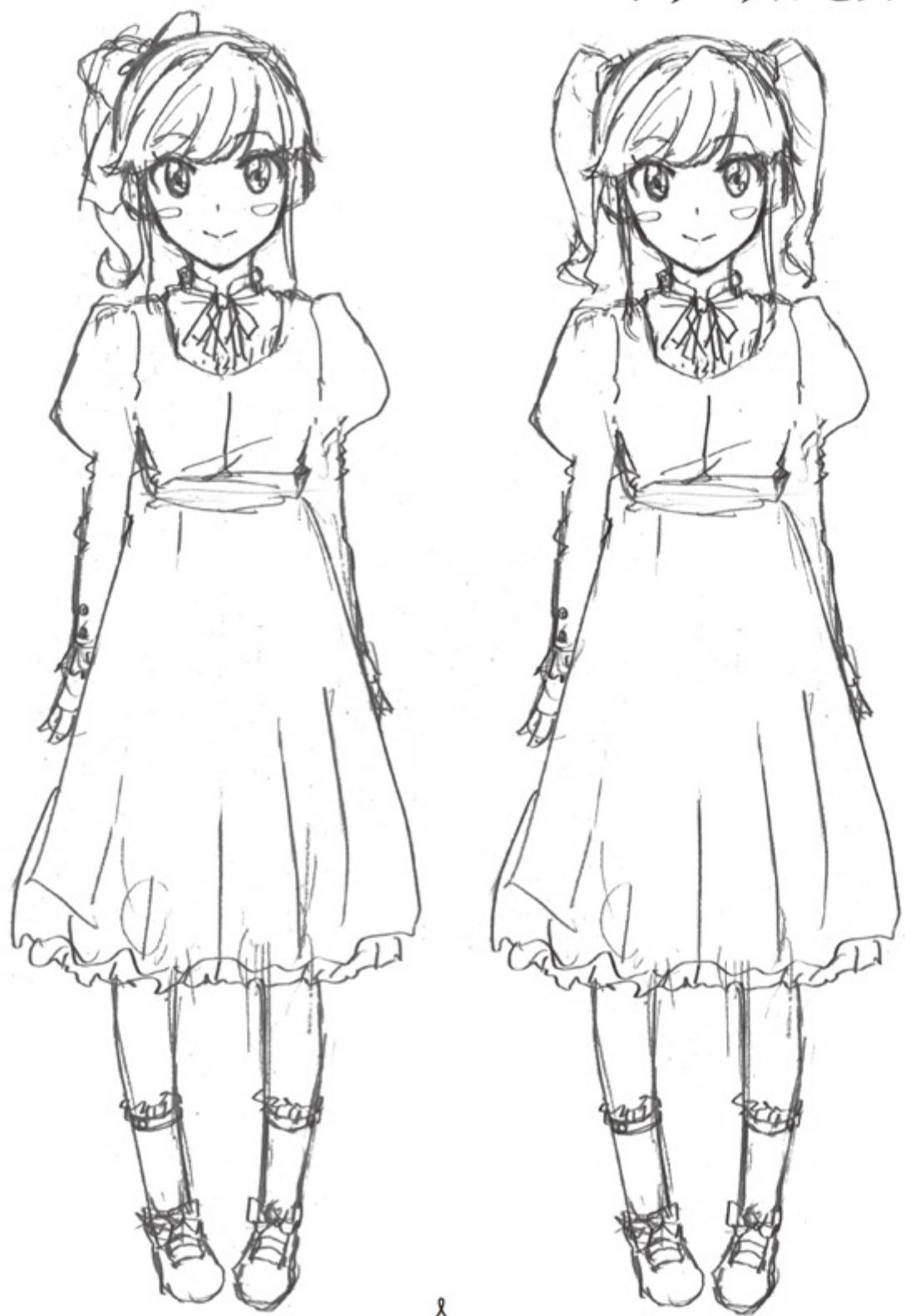
キャラクターデザイン案

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キャラクターデザイン案

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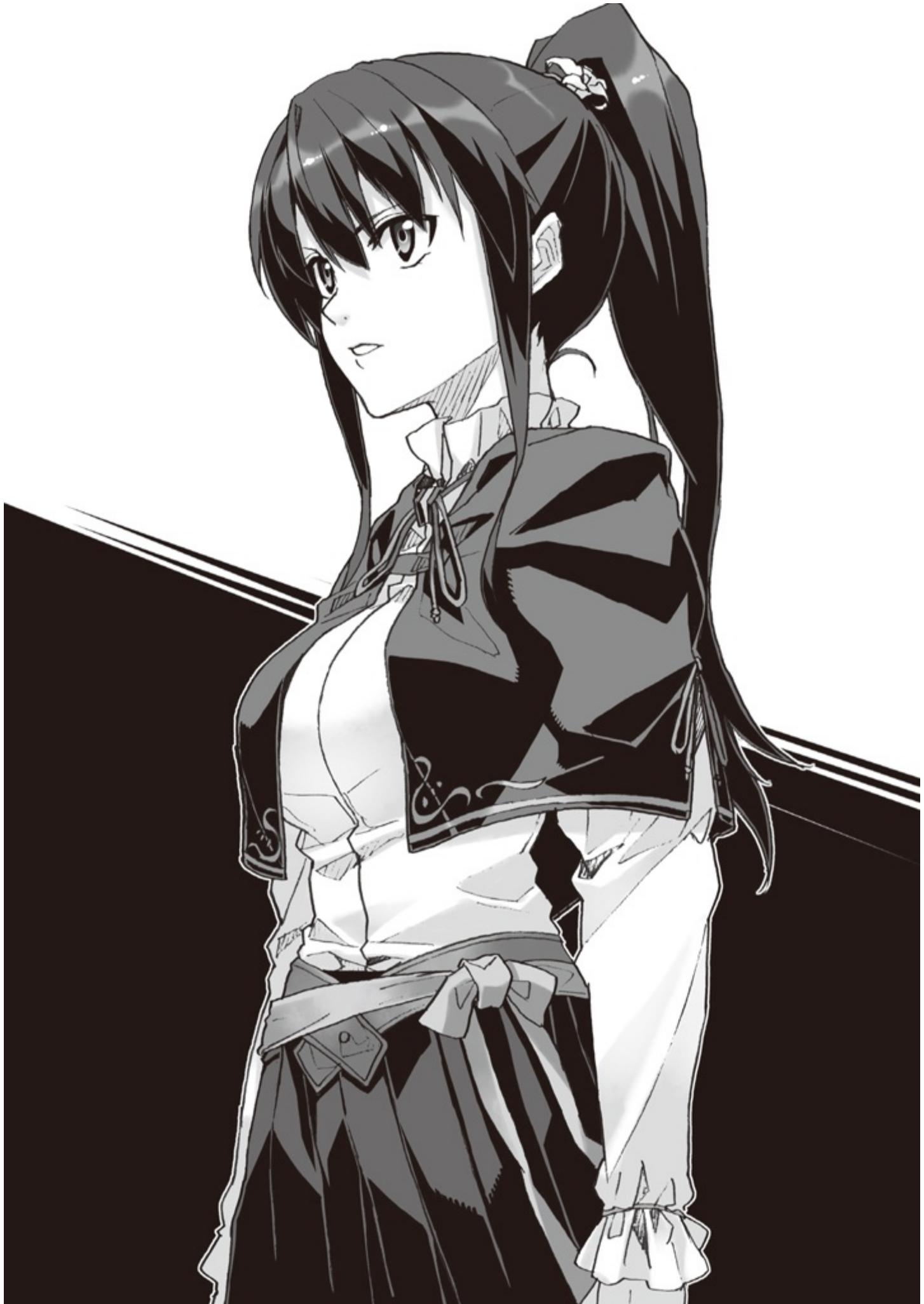
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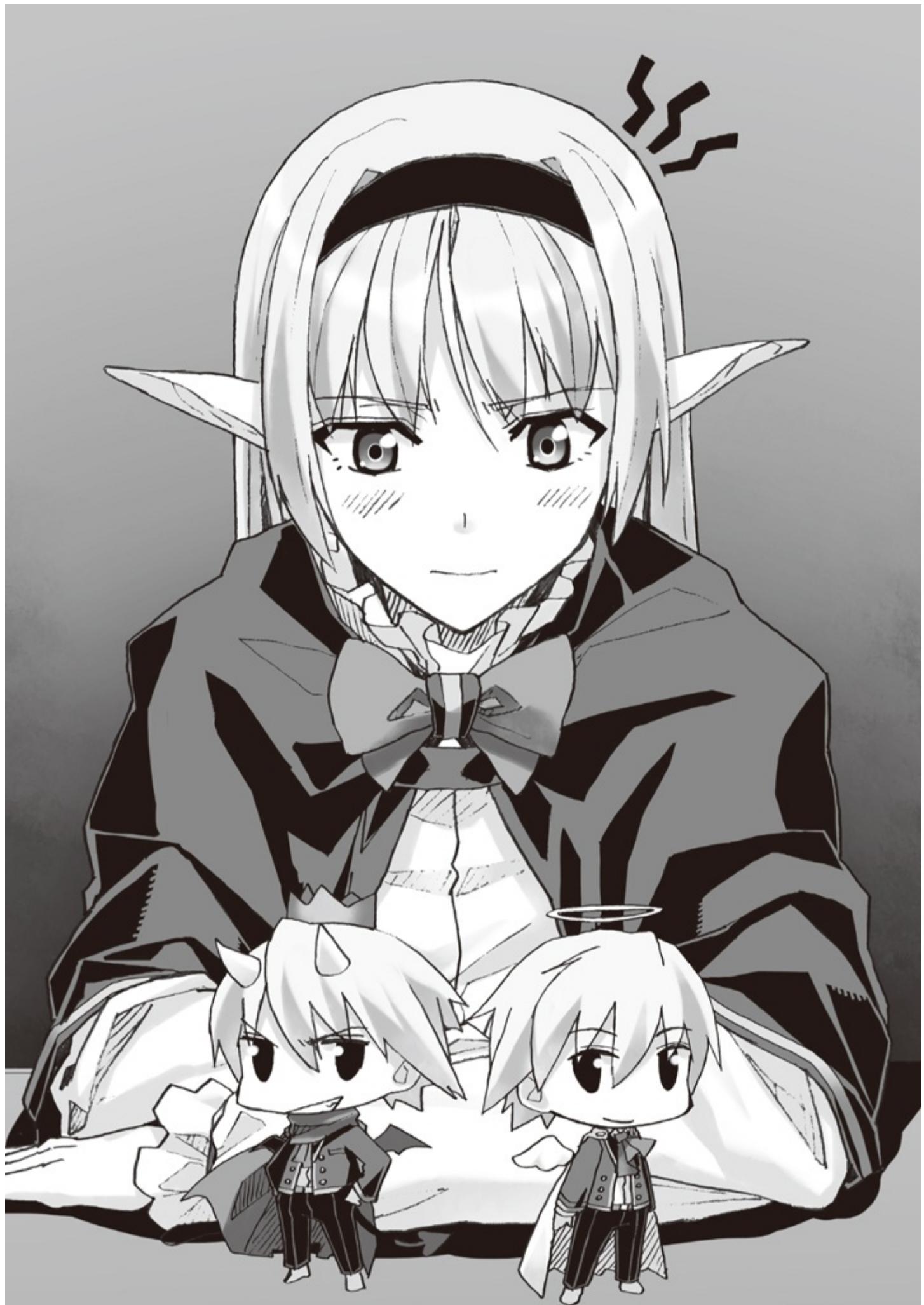


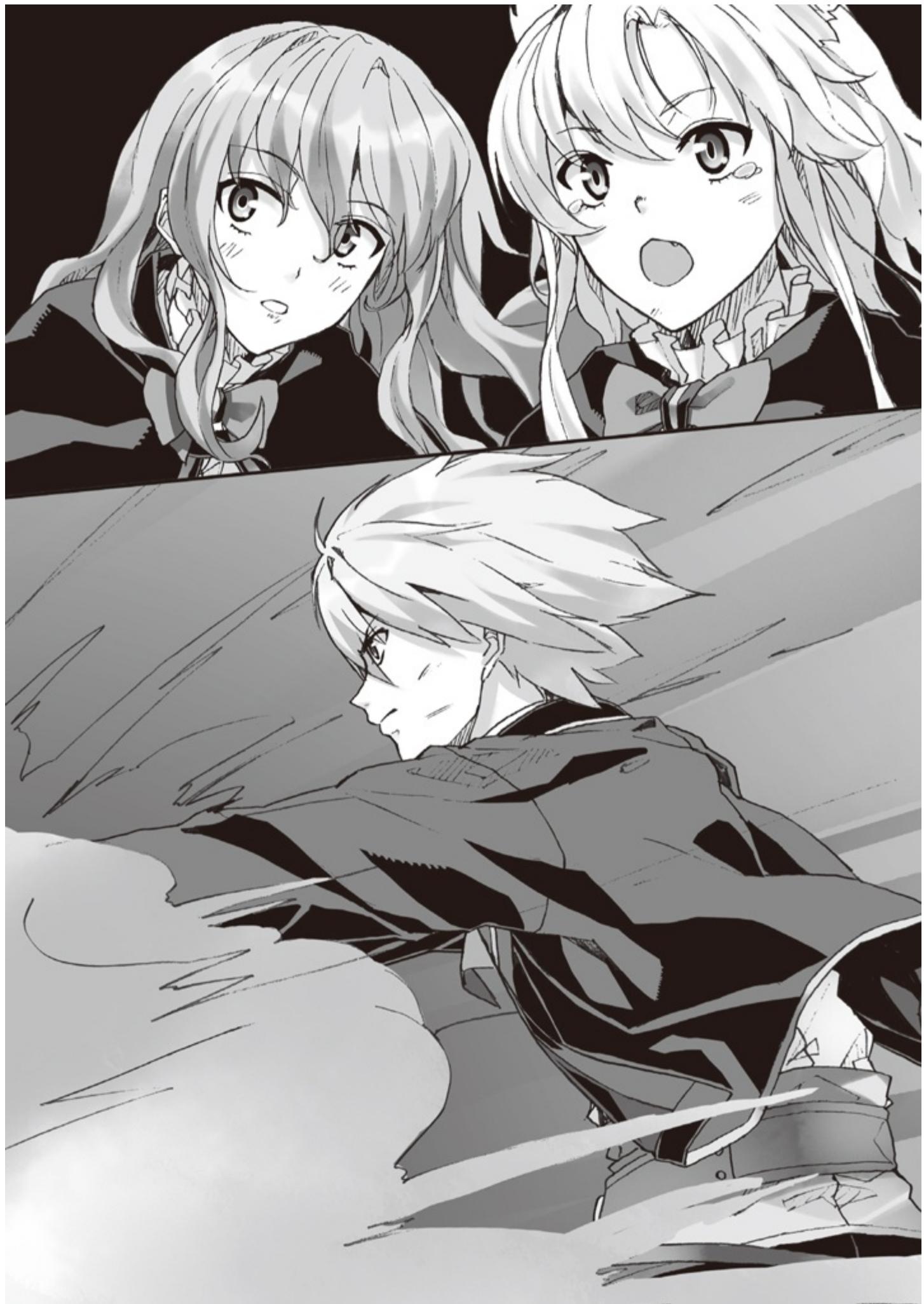


















Chapter 1: The Selfish Boy

It was a territory not far from the capital of the Courtois continent's Courtois Kingdom, its vast lands belonging to one of the three top ranking nobles of the kingdom, the 'Three Lords'. These events would transpire in the lands of the archduke Arses. The Arses house was a lineage that had fallen to corruption over the long history of Courtois.

Exploiting a high tax from its people, that bribe-rampant territory lacked any sense of vigor. But as the people were unable to leave so easily, they could only put up with the pain.

In that vile noble house, the five-year-old selfish and overbearing eldest son Rudel Arses looked up at the sky with his eyes open wide.

"W-what's that!?"

What Rudel saw in the sky was a powerful body of deep emerald hue, and large wings that freely moved that build through the sky... those scales and horns that brought reptiles to mind gave its body a sense of greatness.

It was a dragon... and the ones who controlled them, the knights who protected the country were given the name Dragoon.

Rudel immediately asked the servants around him about the dragon he had seen in the sky. His tone was high-handed, and not the sort of attitude one would expect from a five year old child asking adults.

"What's that!? I never heard... why didn't you tell me!?"

The servants found it stranger there was a child in this country that didn't know about dragons. But they were dealing with the study-hating, exercise-hating, ill-natured Rudel. Irritated as they were, the servants courteously explained the dragon and dragoon to the boy.

"Dragons are among the strongest of monsters, and they are ones who boast a high intellect."

"The ones those dragons obey are the dragoon... the strongest knights in Courtois."

"The knights who become dragoon possess not only strength, they are proud knights of, 'virtue'."

Hearing those words, Rudel's eyes turned from those of a fish rotten with pride, to the eyes of a young boy filled with admiration. But even upon hearing that...

"How much do you have to pay for 'virtue'!? I'll put out as much as need be, so bring it to me at once!"

Unable to understand virtue, his statement about buying his way to it brought in some truly fed-up looks from around. When they thought over how this was the next head of the house, the servants even held a light murderous intent... but there a single servant had an idea. Of how to teach this stupid brat the pains of reality...

At that time, no one could have imagined those words would drag in the Arses House and the Kingdom of Courtois. Right, it had all begun as the 'malice' of these overworked servants.

"Rudel-sama, 'virtue' is a show of a person's dignity and character. It is not something one can obtain with money. It is a valuable item one can only obtain with earnest effort."

On those words, Rudel made a face of failed comprehension. Rudel hated studying, and he was a selfish one. He did have a tutor, but not listening to the tutors words, he had only attended class a handful of times.

"How can I become a dragoon? I want to be a dragoon!"

Hearing that, the servants sniggered within. You really think you can become one? Harsh training, testing one's knowledge and refinement, Courtois' heroes among heroes even the dragons obeyed... the servants politely hammered that reality into Rudel.

"I believe it will be difficult... those who become dragoons are only the strongest knights of the kingdom. Meaning tempering their strength and kindness, knowledge and culture... you also have to receive acknowledgement from the dragons."

"You're saying it's impossible for me!?"

"Yes. But that is not a problem with you. It simply is that difficult to become a dragoon. It is said that even in the vast lands of Courtois, it's a blessing if ten dragoons are knighted in a year."

Rudel didn't take well to that explanation. His yearnings upon seeing the first dragon in his life burned strong enough to singe the young boy's chest.

"... How can I be one? If it's not impossible, then that doesn't mean there's absolutely no way to be one, right? How can I become a dragoon!?"

Sighing at Rudel's attitude, the servants put a subtext of, 'then quit playing around and fix that personality of yours!' into their explanation.

"Rudel-sama, if you continue with your current lifestyle, you will never become a dragoon. A lifestyle befitting a noble, unchanging kindness to all, and unceasing diligence is important... right now, you are lacking in every field."

The servants said it clearly. There was a reason they had to say so much. Generally speaking, Rudel was an idiot. His actions were exorbitant, and he was always troubling his surroundings. His parents only felt value in him as the next heir, leaving him to his own devices as they doted on his younger brother.

He would always instantly forget when someone made a fool of him. That was linked to the cold attitude of his servants.

Perhaps Rudel was actually quite a pitiful one. No one properly keeping him company, always made a fool of by the servants... but right now, Rudel had met an existence that made him lose interest in all of those things.

Rudel had found himself a goal. From that day forth, the selfish and prideful boy genuinely set out for nothing more than to become a dragoon.



From the next day, Rudel rose with the rise of the sun. As he would always rise just before noon, there weren't even any servants in his room as he changed into exercise clothing. No, there was one servant there, but he was asleep in his chair, showing no signs of waking.

On the day the servants mocked him, he had gone around asking them all what he was supposed to do. While they found it a nuisance, the servants had

reluctantly explained, and Rudel had memorized with all his might.

"Wake up early and run, eat healthy foods and chew well before swallowing..."

Mumbling to himself, Rudel left his room and set out... in the still-dim light of the mansion, the form of a wandering, muttering child was surely an ominous one indeed.

And the vast manor was practically what one would call a castle. As Rudel raced around the yard of the castle, he quickly wore himself out. Come so far, his daily disorderly lifestyle and overeating was tormenting him... when he was only five!

Seeing him like that, the servants and soldiers on guard raised their voices and laughed. Among them were even some who were blatantly mocking him. But within all of that, Rudel ran without paying them any mind.

By the time his finished running, his body was covered in sweat, and his body wasn't in a state where it could take in any food. But even so, he went to the kitchen, and begged the chef to prepare something healthy. That was the first time Rudel made an earnest request, but upon hearing that, the chef-partly due to how busy he was in the morning-didn't even stop to think.

Understood, was all he said as he prepared a meal befitting the request.

Rudel's meals were generally alone. Not particularly loved by his parents, and continually scorned by the estate's servants. And what lined his one-man dining table was all the foods he hated... vegetables, dairy products, and chicken for protein... from a commoner's perspective, it was an extravagant feast, but Rudel was the eldest son of an archduke.

This was terrible treatment. What's more, there wasn't any sign the flavoring was done to his tastes. His hated vegetables were still bitter, and the other dishes weren't the sort of thing any child would like.

That was simply how much Rudel was hated. And even if he thought to get revenge, he was an idiot, so he would forget about it in no time, they would say as they blatantly harassed him.

But even so, Rudel,

"Thank you for the meal?"

Gave an awkward greeting as he ate his breakfast. Bitter! He thought as he endured to become a dragoon. And after that was study time with his home tutor. Even if Rudel had found motivation, the tutor had not. While he would generally answer when asked, the rest of it was thrown to the wind.

And even so, Rudel read his textbook, asking time and again on the things he didn't understand. The home tutor who thought of Rudel as an idiot,

"You don't even know that, and you're trying to be a dragoon? You really are a fool."

Spat some cynicism... but it was here that the mansions residents were under a misunderstanding. While there was a problem with Rudel's actions and thoughts, his head wasn't too bad. While he would often take action without any thought, his head had never been for worse.

When he didn't know what to do in order to become a dragoon, he had asked the servants, and he had heard out their answers. And he instantly put it to action. Perhaps that was Rudel's strength. If instantly acting was Rudel's shortcoming, it was also his merit.

Next up was training in swordplay and martial arts. But even there...

"What's wrong, young master!? Trying to be a dragoon when you can't even block this attack, are you trying to make me laugh?"

Rudel cowered from the merciless attacks of his instructing soldier. That soldier who knew how to torment without leaving any lasting marks was a seasoned veteran. But after being stationed in this territory, his first task was to teach the idiot Rudel swordplay... he hit those feelings against the boy.

But even so, Rudel stood.

"How stubborn... well, let's see how long you can hold out!"



You could say the first day was the absolute worst. He was out of breath right after he started running, he didn't get anywhere with his studies, and his body was raising screams from the swordplay. Even so, Rudel pulled out a single book

from the bookshelf and crawled into his own bed.

“Dragoons are the strongest knights...”

It was a book introducing the Courtois kingdom’s dragoons in a way close to a picture book. As Rudel read it aloud, the servant to his side grew irritated.

(Just go to sleep already, damn brat... aah, I’m sleepy.)

He was much too late to notice... the fact that Rudel who had never decently done any study to that point was reading a book...

Once he had finished reading through, Rudel’s eyes closed with the book still left on the bed.

“I’m definitely going to be a dragoon...”

He went right asleep. The servant took the book and returned it to its original place on the bookshelf. And turning the Rudel,

“Like hell you will. You really are an idiot... Fhaaah, I should get some sleep.”

The reason the servant was there in the first place was in case of emergencies. He was definitely not in a position where it was alright to sleep.

Chapter 2: The Hated Boy

On another morning, Rudel ran out again. Having turned ten, Rudel had learned to control the Mana throughout his body to run at a breakneck pace. If he ran in the yard, his parents and the servants would complain, so now he would leave the castle, and run along the city's outer wall... to be more precise, he would run perpendicular to the wall. Such was the amount of speed he put out.

He would run until the time came that his stomach rang out, and trusting in his stomach's clock, he would return to the castle only to find breakfast had been prepared right on time. In a room without any other, he would eat his breakfast... Rudel's daily life hadn't changed in five years.

He would uphold proper manners as he ate, and without fail,
"Thank you for the meal!"

He would say his prayers. Seeing him like that, the servants found Rudel to be eerie. As he talked to himself in an empty room... even with five years gone by, Rudel's treatment hadn't changed.

But even so, Rudel wasn't sad. To Rudel, who simply dreamed of becoming a dragoon as soon as possible, he had no time to worry about anything else, and he didn't know what kindness was to begin with. The only time he ever studied it was within the realm of his books.

Lately, he was asking his tutor less and less. His tutor concluded that he had given up trying. But Rudel had seen through his home tutor's ability. It became more often that he wouldn't get much of an answer even if he asked, so he had switched over to self-study.

He had made numerous requests to his parents for a new tutor, but they wouldn't take him seriously. The reason being, that tutor highly praised his younger brother Chlust. They had taken quite a liking to the tutor who would say, Chlust has a great future ahead of him...

But even Rudel had someone he could respect. His former mercenary

swordplay instructor. He had no relation to young Chlust. Chlust was off being taught by some other famous swordsmaster.

A martial art and swordstyle close to real combat reliably trained up Rudel's body. It was because he could experience it first-hand that Rudel respected the soldier... though he was still mocked nonetheless...

And one day a turning point did come to his life. The birth of a younger sister. His 'two sisters' who would turn three this year were by no means twins. Rudel's father had sown a seed elsewhere.

The first was Erselica, born of his own mother, and the other was Lena. The two of them received complete opposite treatments. Erselica was doted on to no end. Yet while that went on, Lena received only the minimum interaction.

In Courtois where blond hair was most common, Lena was a girl who boasted a rare set of black hair and black eyes. She was holed up in her room more often than not. Yet between Lena and Rudel, a strange stream of meetings would repeat. Rudel's room was on the second floor, while Lena's was right below it.

While Rudel would start moving each day with the rise of the sun, exiting through the front door soon became a pain... he had taken to jumping out of the window. The first time Lena spotted him, she thought of him as a suspicious character. And from that day, she would wake up at that time to observe the suspicious one.

Waking up at sunrise, going out, and returning every day at the same time. It was only a while later she learned he was her brother born of another mother.

At the time, Lena's impression of Rudel was,

"Cool..."

The young girl was somewhat of a strange one. Lena had a nature closer to Rudel. The sort of person who's body would move before her mind, a girl who would eat well and sleep often... and Lena had an interest in Rudel. She would follow him around each day to watch his back.

Perhaps because of that, the name Lena got in the mansion's gossip was the, 'lingering shadow'. The strange Rudel paired with his strange younger sister, it

continued on regardless of the servants' disdain.



"... What are you doing over there?"

"Hah!?"

One day, having finished his sword training, Rudel decided to turn to Lena before returning to his room. He had noticed her for a while now, purposely keeping it off his mind. But as it went on day after day, he was beginning to run out of patience...

When he turned, he found a girl he had never seen before... that was Rudel's impression. As Rudel was fundamentally uninterested in the human relations within the mansion, he didn't even know of the existence of his sisters.

"Y-yo!"

While Lena gave something greeting-like, staring inquisitively at him, Rudel was troubled. He had never expected such a greeting to come in. And he grew some interest.

"... Yo?"

From that day forth, Lena got around to boldly approaching Rudel's side. Rudel had some interest in the girl who hung around him so restlessly, and approved of it.

And they got around to eat breakfast together.

"Bwo, this is bitter..."

As she bit into a vegetable, Lena complained to Rudel. Rudel had eaten it for five years, so he didn't mind it, but generally speaking, Rudel's meals tasted terrible.

"It's full of nutrition, so you have to properly eat... chew well... no, don't just swallow it, you have to chew!"

The bitterness opening a hole in her stomach, Lena swallowed before she could taste the flavor. That was quite a surprise to Rudel... so such a method existed! Thought he... it seems Rudel and Lena were idiots all the same.

And he taught her studies as well. The home tutor was now nothing more than an existence that merely existed, and even if Lena was in the room, he wouldn't say anything.

"One, twoo, three... lots."

"... It's four."

Perhaps Rudel thought her a nuisance at first. But he learned how large her existence had become to him when Lena caught a cold. When the one who always followed him around wasn't there, he couldn't help but worry to no ends.

And seeing her following the following day, Rudel felt relief. Realizing that, Rudel...

"Were you lonely?"

"Why?"

"Nothing. Now don't be picky, you have to properly chew and eat... as I was saying, don't just swallow!"

At the fact he was able to have such a conversation over breakfast, Rudel gave his first heartfelt thanks.



On yet another day, Chlust and a girl he didn't know came walking down the corridor from the opposite direction. Rudel and Lena had business ahead, so of course they walked on. But Chlust and that girl walked right down the center of the passage.

Rudel was the eldest son. So when he walked down the hall, he rarely conceded the road to another. He walked towards Chlust head one... behind Chlust, a few servants held back as they watched the situation.

"Brother, won't you step aside?"

"Chlust, I'm your older brother, and I think my position here is higher than yours."

Brothers separated by a year, but those around thought of Rudel as an idiot,

and Chlust a prodigy.

“Rudel-sama, Chlust-sama is in a hurry, so if you don’t concede the way...”

One of the servants said it, but Rudel wouldn’t stand down. He expressionlessly stood on the spot as he waited for the other party to stand down. The one irritated by it all was Chlust. Chlust would always hear it from those around,

‘If only Rudel wasn’t there... the one worthy of being head is Chlust.’

They would say. So he held an excessive dislike of Rudel’s attitude. And before his cute little sister, conceding the road to Rudel was unthinkable. Erselica gripped Chlust’s hand as she glared at Rudel, the brother she didn’t get involved with.

The servants in the area knew this wasn’t good. So while it would be a detour, they sent Chlust down a different path. Chlust turned his back to Rudel as he walked off...

Seeing her brother, Erselica spoke,

“You just have to do away with him...”

Blood brothers with a large wall in between them... Rudel and Chlust would end up feuding a number of times after that.

Chapter 3: The Boy on a Journey

At the age of fifteen, Rudel had become an adult. His body had grown, and his training had made it sturdy. At this point he could use elementary magic, and apart from swordsmanship, he had learned the spear and the bow... he had acquired various skills. His sister Lena who had followed him around all the way was eight. Her body was growing, and she was receiving a similar education to Rudel.

To Rudel, this year would be an extremely important one. It was decided he was to go to the private academy in Courtois' capital.

"Bro, are you really going to the capital?"

While Lena swung her specialty spear at him, Rudel judged it with his sword as he answered.

"Yeah, you should set your sights on it too. If you don't go there, you can't get the qualifications to be a knight."

Seeing Lena's lonely face, Rudel's heart hurt a bit. When he had finally come around to understand the thing called loneliness, Rudel found it to be nothing more than a troublesome emotion.

"Don't worry. I'll come back on the longer breaks."

"Really!?"

Even as they carried out a heartwarming conversation, they were swinging around their weapons. Their abilities had grown to such a level where it looked as if they were laughing as they tried to strike the other dead. Lena's footwork and the sharpness of her thrusts would put many an adult to shame. And Rudel who could parry them as he carried on a conversation was quite something himself.

... If they weren't underestimated so, perhaps the two of them would be famous throughout Courtois in a good sense.

Rudel was famous in a certain way. As a stupid brat who couldn't even come out in high society... that was Rudel's evaluation that had spread throughout

the world. In Courtois where it was stressed that the eldest son succeed a house, unless something terrible happened, it wasn't permitted for a younger son to take over.

Feeling his sweaty clothing stick to his body, Rudel put a hold on the training. Matching that, Lena sat down on the spot and got her breathing in order.

"Is the academy fun?"

"Who knows? To me, it's a place to become a knight, and I don't really care if it's fun or not... I wouldn't want to go to a place that's just fun, but won't make a knight of me."

Redel carried out maintenance on his training sword as he answered Lena's question. Lena had learned how to do it as well, and she began looking after her spear.

"How do you become a knight?"

"You have to finish the regular curriculum, get enough credits in the required knight courses, and take the combat and written exams."

"Uuurrgh... I'm really no good with written exams."

Once that conversation was over, Rudel noticed the sun was beginning to fall. Standing right up, he walked off towards the manor. His stomach clock was telling him it was time for lunch.



A few days later, Rudel boarded a carriage set for the academy's matriculation ceremony. With a lineage from one of the three lords, the carriage was extravagant, and all the furniture and daily necessities were expensive goods.

The eyes of the civilians as they watched such a carriage were terrible dark.

It wasn't a good feeling to watch the son of the nobles exploiting them off on a trip in an extravagant carriage. Of the ones who came to see him off, his parents and the servants' attitudes didn't change much from usual. On the contrary, some of them rejoiced.

'He's finally gone.'

Lately, Rudel had gotten around to feeling lonely. In these ten years, he had paid special care to treating all with respect. The fact that his evaluation still hadn't changed must have been his own fault, he thought.

He found it hard to bear his past assessments forever, and at the same time, he thought that was simply how hopeless he had been. But even so, Rudel wanted to be a Dragoon.

As he set off, Rudel had a letter from his sister Lena clasped in his hand.

'Do your best!'

Those words alone lightened his heart up considerably... looking outside the carriage window, he saw the skies were as high as ever. And at the same time, he spotted the dragon he yearned for racing across it. Hurriedly sticking his body out the window as if to jump out, he continued gazing at the dragon.

The beast that went out of sight before long stirred up his heart. Could this not be the dragon blessing my journey? Rudel made himself misunderstand. And using that as fuel, he resolved himself to do his best at the academy.



Having seen a dragon even before reaching Courtois Academy, Rudel was in high spirits. He was dragged right into what you could call the academy's kickoff specialty, the traffic congestion around its gates. But even so, in his high spirits, Rudel killed time without a care in the world.

The book on dragoons he had read through enough to wear out the bindings, and his new textbooks that would become indispensable at school... he read them through to crush time.

"As I thought, this is a nice book no matter how many times I read it."

Was it strange for a grinning fifteen year old boy to read something close to a picture book? Perhaps thinking so, the academy's general admitted students sent Rudel some sickened eyes as they walked passed the carriage.

There, a single young girl raise a large voice.

"How idiotic. Reading a picturebook made just to flatter those stuckup dragoons... humans really are savages, and you nobles are beyond help."

Rudel overreacted at that voice. Putting the book down, he jumped from the carriage and glared at the girl. Green hair and long ears... looking at the girl who could be none other than an elf demi-human, Rudel gave an objection.

"I want you to take that back..."

Rudel himself couldn't understand why he leapt from the carriage and drew close to the girl. When he usually wouldn't put the slightest mind to surrounding opinions, for him to react to such an extent was downright strange... Rudel convinced himself that he was just nervous, having come to an unfamiliar place.

"... I'm sorry. I may have said too much."

"Hah? What are you talking about? More importantly, that crest on your carriage is the seal of Archduke Arses, right? So you're the eldest son of the worst territory in Courtois?"

When Rudel tried to bring the matter to a close, this time the girl drew closer. The Arses House's rule was terrible. He knew that, and he did feel sorry for the people. Rudel himself had consulted with his parents a number of times, but 'Don't stick your mouth in!' they wouldn't take him seriously.

Yet to Rudel, the girl with large slightly-slanting eyes went on.

"How carefree! When there are people suffering because of you, you're sitting here reading a picture book? Isn't there something else you should be doing!?"

The elf girl admonished him with overbearing eyes. But the servants in his carriage nodded at those words without the slightest attempt to save Rudel. Against the eldest son of one of the three lords, this wouldn't pass as mere rudeness. What the general elf student was doing was an action that may result in the execution of her entire tribe.

It wasn't favorable to have commoners ridiculing nobles. The guards at the academy gates gathered to control the problem. It was something that happened every year, and they barely even reported it at this point. It was an indefinite cycle...

"I understand they are suffering. That is why I came here to learn... if I've said

something to offend you, I apologize."

Rudel couldn't understand why he had picked a fight with this girl. He'd usually just ignore it...

All present were taken aback by Rudel's response... it was so rare to see a high-ranking nobles apologize that they were troubled to respond.

While that was going on, a single boy rounded the gate, coming on foot just like the generally admitted students. He wore the splendid garb of a noble, though he had dressed it down a bit. As he came upon the indescribably scene of Rudel and the girl, he let out a laugh.

"Oy, oy, what's an inexperienced kid like you doing, approaching such a young elven maiden?"

??? No one present could understand his words. At that moment, everyone around was struggling to respond to Rudel's apology... sure enough, based on how you looked at it, it could possibly appear as if he was approaching her, but...

Shimmering gold hair, the boy with mismatched eyes of blue and green boasted features so beautiful they came off as ominous. A boy so beautiful it was unnatural... on his clothing, the 'Seal of Count Hardie' was embroidered in golden thread.

"No, we're already done here."

The elf girl quickly regained her composure, leaving as if to flee from the Hardie boy and Rudel.

"Huh? By the event, that was supposed to become a duel to set up her flag... did I fiddle around with history a little too much?"

Those around found the boy's loud monologue considerably eerie. 'A duel? Give us a break! That guy's from one of the Three Lords' houses! It'll be our responsibility!' By the soldiers' ulterior motives, Rudel and the boy were forcibly parted, and Rudel's carriage gained priority to enter the academy.

That was to be the meeting of the 'protagonist' boy, and his 'foil' Rudel.

Chapter 4: The Suspicious Boy

After that ruckus at the academy gate, Rudel dismounted the carriage, and carried his belongings off to the boys' dorm he would be using. His few possessions were brought in with only a few round trips, and after the servants gave some vague words of parting, they immediately made off.

"Not a bad room at all... though I get the feeling this room's a bit too big for one as part of a school dorm."

Removing his heavily ornamented nobles clothes, he changed into something easier to move in as he scanned over his schedule. After tomorrow's entrance ceremony, an explanatory meeting and a welcome party awaited. At age fifteen, the students would choose between a two, three, or five year curriculum... there was sure to be many more talented than he, and he was competing with them to be a knight.

As he thought over such a thing, Rudel started moving his body in the room he had finished getting in order. With all this tension and anxiety, if I don't move around... he felt.

But even if he did it, he couldn't calm down. Ever since he came to the academy, he experienced anxiety and nervousness he had never felt before. He felt something close to an obsession forcing him to leave his room.

"What is this? This has never happened before..."

He spoke as he put on just enough clothing that he wouldn't be embarrassed if seen walking around. Even if he walked around the academy-the immediate area around the boys' dorm to be precise- 'this isn't the place,' a strange feeling resounded through his head... oh whatever! He let his legs move as they fancied.

And where his feet led him... was the girl's dorm.

"Am I really that pent up? No, that's, well... I am a guy, and it's not like I don't have any interest."

Rudel was quite flustered at the fact he had unconsciously walked here. To

him, a number of female soldiers approached warily.

"What are you doing over there? That is the girls' dorm, and it's forbidden for any males to enter."

It was a courteous explanation, but the girl's dorm held some students of high social standing. As these soldiers would be the first to be disposed of if anything happened, the boys were nothing but troublesome existences.

Because of that, polite as they were, there was power in the hands they used to grip the swords on their waists.

"M-my apologies. I just lost my way... could you direct me towards the boys' dorm?"

"... I'll take you there. But don't think that excuse will work a second time."

The fed-up group stuck a single on Rudel and sent him on his way.

"Good grief, it will be troublesome if you nobles don't get a grip on yourselves! Listen here, one mistake, and it'll be a large problem that'll erupt in turmoil between houses..."

The female soldier walking ahead scolded and explained with a weary voice. These academy problems that were often hushed up were sources of unceasing hardships for the soldiers.

Looks like you have it hard... was all Rudel could feel. He had no indecent feelings to start with, and it was a place he didn't think he'd approach again. Rudel occasionally apologized to the female soldier's words as he walked down the path to the boys' dorm.

"Ah! Could you show me your student ID? It's regulations, for argument's sake, so I have to confirm your identity..."

From nobles to general applicants, the academy housed countless students, and carrying around a student ID was an obligation. It was a measure to make sure no strange folks slipped in, but managing the students was its main purpose. The student ID recorded the number of house arrests to that point, and the sorts of problems one had caused.

"Here you go."

Aiming for a lawful life, Rudel carried around his ID just as stated in the school regulations he had confirmed beforehand. When he handed it over...

"... Rudel Arses? Archduke Arses-sama's!!! M-my deepest apologies!!! I have gone too far beyond my bounds! You had some sort of business at the girls' dorm, correct? I'll take you back at once..."

"N-no, I really was just lost!"

"Yes! I-in that case, I shall call for, 'someone who can introduce you to those sorts of woman'.. so please, if possible... please, not the students... my apologies, I'm being rude, aren't I."

Rudel looked upon the flurried female soldier with considerable pity. And at the same time, he understood just how he was seen... did he really look that starved? That on his mind, he became terribly depressed.



Somehow managing to clear up the misunderstanding, Rudel returned to his room and relaxed. Perhaps interacting with more people than ever before had worn him out, and while it was still early, he decided to sleep.

Once morning came, he opened his eyes at daybreak as had become custom. After going to get the uniform he forgot to retrieve the day before, he realized he had the time, so he decided to venture out to the boys' dorm courtyard.

But that scene was nowhere near tranquil. The crude crowd of men practiced their swords and held matches, the sound of wood and metal colliding ringing out all around. The sight was one that delighted Rudel.

(Everyone's working hard after all. If I don't put in my best, they'll overtake me in no time.)

So Rudel found an open space in the yard and started swinging his sword. A number of upperclassmen spotted him and tried to say something, but instead decided to leave him be as they shed their own sweat.

After a while went by, the bell rang out six times... hearing that, the students began cleaning up and walking towards the cafeteria. Rudel hesitated over whether or not to follow.

"You're a new student, aren't you? Even if you're going over, you can take it easy for now... the place is empty around this hour."

"It was written that the cafeteria was popular, so it's better to hurry."

Rudel recalled a list of important pointers he had read sometime before. In regards to that, the upperclassman boy,

"It gets crowded when the bell rings seven times. But the folks around here are about the only ones up at this hour."

So like that he followed his upperclassmen, and entered the school cafeteria. In it, the forms of boys with their plates piled high with food... caused his own stomach to hurt.

"See, isn't it empty? I'm Vargas, a third year."

"I'm Rudel. Rudel Arses."

"A noble? I'm from the sticks, so I'm a bit dim when it comes to nobles... well whatever, let's get along."

Upperclassman Vargas, with his long, red hair tied behind. His cocoa tanned skin and firm build did feel a bit frightening, but after talking to him, he was a sociable young man.

"Yes!"

To Rudel, it was the moment he got a friend he could talk to outside of his family.



Returning to his room from the cafeteria, Rudel changed into his uniform, entering a large building under academy orders. Rather than an auditorium, it was practically... right, it was a space like an arena. As fighting did actually happen in this space, the description wasn't wrong, but...

"I rejoice at the many youngsters we welcome through our doors this ye..."

After receiving the long address of the headmaster, the students were split into classes and sent to their classrooms. Generally speaking, the school taught only the basis over the first two years, and the class separation was only in

place to separate opposing nobles, or gather those of low standing in one place... they were arbitrary things.

But Rudel was the eldest son of the Arses House, one of the Three Lords. To avoid any courtesy, he was sent to the class solidified with young nobles. And this year, besides Rudel, the eldest sons of the other Three Lords would be entering as well, so the academy was filled with a tense air.

"I hope we get along for the next two years."

The homeroom teacher gave a light greeting, and the class introductions... was supposed to end safely.

But it couldn't be so. Something would happen, no, he had to make something happen! A strange sensation ruled over Rudel. Worrying over that sensation he had never felt before coming to this university, Rudel finished his own introduction without incident.

And yet!

"Izumi Shirasagi."

With the introduction of a single girl of the orient, the air of the classroom took a turn. Black hair and eyes were a rare sight in Courtois; those oriental characteristics became the perfect target to the children. Jeers flew, and statements to hurt the girl fluttered around.

A class centered around nobles. For an orient girl to be in that class, it was likely under the pretense of cultural exchange. In actuality, it was to direct eyes towards her to make sure the nobles didn't snarl at one another.

The boys behind her pulled at her long, ponytail-tied hair in jest... In the girl being harassed, Rudel saw his own sister Lena. Unlike Lena's uncurling hair looked silky to the touch.

"Why don't you stop? Do you know how shameful you look?"

It only took a line from Rudel's mouth for the classroom to return to silence. The teacher endorsed it and cautioned the students who teased her. For these kids who grew up in noble society, they were well attuned to the pecking order. By house status, there was no one who could oppose Rudel of the Three Lords.

And at the end, the teacher praised Rudel, and those around approved... to Rudel, that scene looked terribly twisted.

Chapter 5: The Pickup Boy and the Reincarnated Boy

Rudel had safely entered the academy. With confirming the basics, and understanding individual situations, the first three months at the academy consisted of aptitude tests. Everyone had lived in a different environment... the differences in individual achievement and environment would help shape future policies.

And like that, the academy was evaluating their new students... but the teachers feuded over Rudel's assessment.

"This can't be possible! The fact he already completed basic education is one thing... but from elementary magic to swordplay and martial arts, these numbers are simply abnormal!"

"And I heard Rudel-sama of the Arses House was supposed to be a failure."

"Looks like we have a good harvest this year... the other Three Lords' eldest sons are also specialized in magic and swordplay."

"But is it not insignificant when put against Aleist Hardie's abnormality? That boy can use advanced magic, can he not? Even though he's self-taught, his swordplay's quite something."

"Using and mastering are different things! This is why you big-headed oafs are... listen here, Rudel-sama has already mastered elementary magic. In the mock-battles, the examiners taking him on grow weak at the knees and resign partway through!"

The teachers mulled... right, being incapable was a problem, but being too capable was just as much. In regards to how troubled they were in handling him...

Labelled a problem child, while Rudel was fundamentally an idiot, he was honest. He earnestly listened to his lessons, and there was no problem with his attitude towards the teachers. He had a hatred of any malicious teasing, and in class, he was suppressing the surroundings.

There was little to teach him. Rather, there was nothing!

In the combat test mock battles, a number of examiners had already been defeated. Even if they were examiners of the basic curriculum, they had a level of ability.

And Rudel would occasionally display extraordinary behavior. He had challenged students who had gained knight qualifications to a match, and questioned the talented students and teachers studying magic whenever he didn't understand something... he would do all manner of unexpected things.

And the problem was his declaration, 'I want to be a Dragoon'. The heroes among heroes whose caliber was difficult to find in all of the country... if a well-to-do noble brat said he wanted to be one, there would be people who'd pick a fight. But Rudel's standing was so high that if anything happened, it wouldn't be strange for everyone's head to fly.

"Why did it come to this!? He's so terribly talented and earnest we can't even caution him, and pushing discipline onto him is difficult..."

The teacher's distress continued on...



Three months since enrollment, Rudel was reviewing the lesson with Izumi in the classroom. To Izumi who had come from a foreign land, she could never fail to review.

"This is difficult..."

While she was good with numbers, word problems were her undoing. As things were, this would definitely make for something terrible.

Sitting beside her, Rudel read a book as he overlooked Izumi's studies. Even Rudel had his problems. Izumi's clothes were too light... brimming with interest, Rudel struggled to keep it suppressed in his heart.

(Kuh! Why is it so light... I can see right through to your skin can I not!!!)

At fifteen in the midst of puberty, Rudel had begun to develop interest in things apart from Dragons. And lately, he had been privy to a variety of encounters. The knight in charge of the girls' dorm security, and the basic magic teacher... they were all women.

(Is it that? A trial to seduce me and prevent me from becoming a dragoon?
Then I shall not lose!!!)

Rudel found new resolve in the strangest of places. Why had he stumbled down such a monk-like train of thought?



So Rudel decided to consult Vargas on the matter.

“... Yeah, so? You don’t have to react over every light piece of clothing you see! And of course you’ll have some contact with the dorm manager and female teachers if you’re a student! How old are you supposed to be?”

To Rudel’s consultation, Vargas gave a weary answer.

“Fifteen.”

“I know! I was asking about your mental age! Listen here, just...”

Just as Vargas was about to explain, two female teachers crossed their paths. Spotting them, the teachers waved their hands in greeting. Vargas put on airs as he waved back... Rudel seemed to want to say something.

“Y-yeah. You and me, we’re both young, is all it means. Yep!”

“What do I have to do to stop being mindful of it? Honestly, enduring it and such feels like I’m wasting time, or rather...”

“Who knows? Perhaps it’ll be different if you get some experience or something.”

On Vargas’ careless remark, Rudel sprung to action. Standing from the start, he found new resolve.

“Got it! I’ll go get experience! Thank you Vargas!”

... On Rudel’s words, at first Vargas saw him off with a wave. Once Rudel was out of sight, he finally realized.

“Ah! Wait! Hold it, Rudel!!!”



Rudel hadn’t confirmed what he was supposed to experience. So the boy had

come to the library to collect data. It was a library worthy of a private academy, and for now, Rudel was searching for a book pertaining to experience.

“... It’s no good. I can’t find anything.”

Normally, he’d use the place whenever he wanted to research the ecology of dragons, and the skills he’d need to be a dragoon, so he had never even imagined it would take time to find something. Then I just have to ask! He had continued acting on pure instinct...

‘The following student(s) have been put under house arrest. Rudel Arses.’

In the discipline room of the boys’ dorm, Rudel sat in a chair. He prayed that this wouldn’t have any influence on his future. This won’t prevent me from becoming a dragoon, right? More importantly, isn’t two weeks of penitence a bit much? All I did was say, give me some experience! What’s experience? All I did was ask...

As Rudel thought over such a thing, Vargas brought him his meal.

“The hell were you doing!? Listen, when it comes to experience between man and woman, it’s got to be ○○○! Now try saying that with a straight face... are you a pervert!?”

“You have a point. I’ve never heard of someone greeting with the words, ‘Want to have ○○○?’ But can you really say it never happens?”

“What’s with that train of thought!?”

While this may be a digression, of the women pressed by Rudel... he had called out to a few hundred, and received relatively favorable replies from a few dozen.

Among them, several... female students even said okay.

As Rudel had perfectly exercised the strategy, ‘if you shoot enough times, you’ll eventually hit something,’ from that day forth, the male students held him in awe, and granted him the title the, ‘Pickup Guy’.



Aleist Hardie was a reincarnator. Blond hair, and heterochromia garnished his unnatural-level beauty... that was Aleist. He held a complete understanding of

this world. Its growth system, events, capture guides... it had all come from the world of a game he loved.

Within all of that, there was an existence he could call irregular. Rudel.

His role was supposed to be that of the son of a prideful noble, and the symbol of the vile nobles tormenting the people. With a nature that hated hard work and resolved everything with money, he'd calmly carry out the most cowardly of deeds.

Rudel was supposed to be a stepping stone character to the protagonist Aleist. In the opening event, he was supposed to defeat Rudel drawing close to an elf girl in a cool manner, setting up a flag with that girl.

Right after that, Rudel would take his tag-alongs and have a dispute at the girls' dorm. There, the elf girl would seek help from him, and he'd defeat Rudel and his followers... it was supposed to be a big event where Aleist would suddenly become popular, but Rudel had returned right after he appeared.

"What's going on? Is it my fault for not being a commoner like the protagonist? Is it because I got this count status that the girls won't approach? ... In that case, this is the worst! Why did I have to go wish for status 'back then'? I'm an idiot!!"

But that would surely end soon. At the end of the first year, an event awaited him. The class tournament separated tournament... a one-on-one battle between five class representatives of each year.

"My current status is that of an advanced job 'Rune Knight', and I can use advanced magic. Honestly, I can fight the graduates at my level. So how am I going to kill time until then... there aren't events with the main cast yet, and I haven't met the elf 'Millia' since then... aah, I'm bored."

To Aleist who knew everything there was to know about the growth system from the start, it was easy to reach an advanced job by the time he turned fifteen. In magic and swordplay, Aleist was called the strongest in his year.

... Yet the opening cast he spoke of, 'Millia', 'Izumi', and 'Vargas' had all come in contact with Rudel already.

Get off your ass and look for them, Aleist-kun...

Chapter 6: The Boy and the Samurai Girl

A long break in the school year. Alongside it, Rudel returned to his home. Even if he was only gone for three months, everything had been a first for him, and felt a bit of growth on his part.

But there was no change in his treatment at his home Arses House. Even more than that... the moment his father saw his report card, he became jealous of the boy who was performing even better than he had. Rudel's father wasn't that good of a boy himself, and once he learned his idiot son Rudel was more talented than him, his attitude took a blatant change.

"What good is that scrap of paper!? No matter how much effort a worthless human like you puts in, there's no point at all!"

Rudel's father had put all his expectations on Chlust. Smart and obedient Chlust... Yet the talented Rudel had surpassed all the talent he saw in Chlust.

"Your face is an irritating sight to behold!"

If they realize I'm not useless, would the surrounding attitude change? Rudel's light expectations fell as they came. Having experienced various meetings in the academy, his life at home was all the more painful.



"Bro? When you've finally come home, you don't look to well."

Rudel's half-sister Lena grew curious as she ate breakfast with him, and posed the question. Her brother who would usually eat the terrible-tasting breakfast without leaving anything behind had barely touched his meal.

"Yeah, let's see... hey, why do you think I'm hated?"

"? What are you talking about, bro? I love you quite a bit."

Rudel was exposed to the pure smile of his sister. His feelings grew a bit lighter.

"I see... that's right. Thank you, Lena."

Rudel thought. There was a time when he thought the surrounding attitudes

were only natural. But now he had grown to feel anxiety at the hatred around him... it was surely because he was weak, he convinced himself.

And at the same time, Rudel knew he had to treasure the people who did hold a positive impression of him. From here on, he was sure to face more precious encounters.

"And also! You're not going to become a dragoon like that. My big brother's a guy who never loses hope."

On those words, Rudel burst into a smile. Lena's reaction showed she didn't know what was going on.

"That's right! That's exactly right. It's not like me to be depressed forever. Want to do some training outside?"

"Yeah! I need to show you how much stronger I've become in your three months away."



Like that, the break ended, and Rudel returned to school. He arrived at the academy a few days early, and when he looked around, the only acquaintance he could find was Izumi. Rather... he hadn't even asked if Izumi returned home.

Preparing some sweets from his home territory as a gift, Rudel invited Izumi to the cafeteria for tea. He brought with him some standard baked pastries. Seeing them, Izumi accepted them apologetically.

"I'm sorry. I wasn't able to bring any souvenirs."

On those words, Rudel asked without thinking.

"You didn't go home? Why?"

While she hesitated a bit, Izumi had come to understand Rudel's personality to an extent over the course of three months. Rudel rarely acted after reading the mood. He wouldn't even bother to remember things that didn't interest him. On the other hand, he would try his hardest to learn all there was to learn over what he had an interest in...

Giving up, Izumi explained.

"My home's far away, and my household was never very affluent. And I'm a woman, right? Yet here I am commuting to school in a foreign land. I have quite a few relatives who don't think too highly of it. It may be difficult to understand with our difference in culture."

Rudel listened in all seriousness. To him, whether she was woman or man wasn't a large problem. There were female knights among the Dragoon. That was more than enough proof that women could be just as skilled.

What's more, he was interested in Izumi's orient swordplay. The first time he saw her pulling out her slender, curved, 'katana,' to slice, he found himself moved.

But be that as it may, Rudel wouldn't refute her culture.

"There are many things I don't know about culture, so I can't say anything about it. But I don't think you need to look down on yourself just because you're a woman. You're strong, and beautiful."

"wait, what!? R-Rudel? Did you hit your head or something?"

Izumi's face reddened. But at the same time, she recalled Rudel's personality. From her point of view, Rudel could be summed up as an oddball. At times he would take exorbitant action, and because of that, he would often drag in his surroundings. But he was a hard worker, and earnest at his base... Rudel was fundamentally unable to flatter.

It was quite often she was troubled by him saying whatever came to mind, but hearing him call her beautiful was something she was happy about.

"What's wrong? Did I say something bad again? Then I'll apologize..."

"Hah, that isn't it. I've just never had someone look me in the face and call me beautiful before... anyways, did you enjoy your trip home?"

Izumi tried to change the subject. But,

"Oh? Was my house fun? I'm more interesting in learning what I said wrong."

Unable to avoid it, Izumi carefully explained it to him with a reddened face. To make it a bit more indirect, or that she'd misunderstand if he said it so seriously to her face... so it came to pass that two days before school would resume, the

scarce remaining students watched over Rudel and Izumi with warm eyes.



The second term, and the period with the most school events. The first and second year student were just taught the basic curriculum, so they carried them out alongside their daily studies. But the academy was generally a place to put out knights and magicians, war power and officials for the state... the events were made in order to match.

"Next month, we'll be training in the art of monster hunting. This is a joint event between all the first and second years, and you won't get any credit if you skip out."

As the homeroom teacher explained, the class largely populated by nobles let out some boos. It was training utilizing the forest close to the grounds. Of course, even if you called it close, it was still a few kilometers away... the monster hunting training there basically taught how to use groups to subjugate monsters practically anyone could defeat.

It was combat training to pound group coordination into their bodies. Of course, a monster subjugating specialist would tag along. With the opposition between classes, it was also a sort of competition. And the first ranking class between the two years gained the reward called honor... well, they didn't really get anything.

"Combat, eh... it's my first real battle."

Rudel was fired up over the training everyone was so reluctant to take part in. He would be taking on monsters anyone could take down, but those monsters generally came in large numbers. While guaranteeing the safety of the academy, they were also reducing the monster populations, making it quite a beneficial training session.

"Then let's begin class. Open your textbooks to..."



An abnormality was breaking out in the forest close to the academy. Trees had fallen, and the corpses of weak monsters were scattered all over the place. Alongside a low growl, a large body covered in fur moved.

“Grrrruuuu!!!”

A single powerful boar, its red eyes glowed as it made a mess of a monster. Alongside that clearly abnormal scene, the monster mismatched with the place disappeared into the depths of the forest.

A black pelt, with white lines racing all over its body, a monster that had never been sighted before. But just what meaning could the appearance of this ‘non-existent monster’ hold...

Chapter 7: The Boy and the Older Woman

The academy's air was different than usual. The students of the standard curriculum had all gathered on the grounds, wearing easy-to-move-in clothing, each of them carrying a weapon. The weapons were either personal possessions or ones borrowed from the academy, and there was no sense of uniformity with their equipment.

"Henceforth, you shall march to the nearby forest..."

The teacher charged with explaining told the students all the important points and dangers. But in the end, thinking they were just taking on some weak monsters, the students were lax.

The march began. It was an established annual event, so perhaps the teachers were lacking tension as well... as they marched in considerable numbers, their appearance ranged from children with children weapons to a full-fledged army. Right, a mishmash of an army...



Aleist's class proceeded forward with Aleist at the front eliminating everything in his path. To Aleist, this event was good EXP farming, nothing more and nothing less.

"Ah, Aleist, that's no good, I'm telling you! You're destroying the forest."

From repeated attacks of wide-range intermediate magic, the forest trees were felled, and the earth gouged out... almost as if a storm had passed through...

His classmates watched him as if they were looking upon something dreadful. But the boy in question didn't notice. For that was all this event was to him...

"Something of this level's no problem at all... and if we keep at it like this, we'll come in first."



On another path than the group brute forcing their way through, Rudel

proceeded forwards with much hardship. While his classmates marched through the forest, someone would have to take command. The monster hunting specialists watched the students from the rear, and if things grew dangerous, they would call out orders.

But in all other cases, Rudel was chosen as commander due to his high grades. Of course, the fact no one could go against his lineage was another reason. It was a single method to shut up the young nobles.

Perhaps that was why... between the high nobles, this had become something of a competition. Though Rudel didn't seem to care...

The experts irrelevant to all of that grinned as they watched over Rudel's clumsy command and combat. When he tried to move, comrades would be in the way, and while he fought, those comrades would find themselves lost... a glance was enough to know they were facing troubles.

"Kuh! We're not getting anywhere."

"Calm down, Rudel. More than the monsters, just proceeding through this forest is pushing our limits."

Izumi explained to Rudel. Looking around, his classmates tired from walking through unfamiliar woods had suffered more injury from the trees than any monster.

As such matters repeated, the sun began its downward climb, and the forest grew dark. As camping was also a part of the training, the class assembled from nothing but nobles was at a severe disadvantage. Of course, that class had some talented experts supporting from behind.

"Oy! Why do I have to do something like pitch a tent!?"

"Hurry it up! We're all tired, and we want some rest!"

"Then why don't you do it, penniless noble!"

Behind, the experts smiled as they looked over these annual customs. Rudel was also irritated things weren't going his way. Looking at the map, he felt disheartened at the fact he couldn't even reach the designated point.

"So the forest is a bigger threat than the monsters... can't laugh at that."

The goal of this event was to be the first ones to reach the destination point. At this rate, it was quite plausible they would come in last. The classes with more commoners had advanced a considerable distance. At this point, there was surely a great divide between them. Was this the reality... Rudel thought as his spirits dropped.

"Let's just rest for today. We can set out early tomorrow."

Izumi's consoling didn't have much of an effect on him. To Rudel, this was a vital event that would influence his grades. In becoming a dragoon, his grades at the academy would be one of the criteria. When he thought of it like that, Rudel couldn't keep still.

"We'll definitely make up for today's loss tomorrow!"

Rudel resolved himself. But reality wasn't so sweet.



The monster hunting experts, there were various ways to refer to them, but they were pretty much soldiers. They ranged from the stray mercenaries and adventurers, to those extraordinarily skilled in defense... various sorts had gathered.

Among them were some hoping for fateful encounters through this event. By no means related to romance. They were guards trying to sell themselves to the young nobles... they had obtained information on the influential nobles beforehand. While it wasn't strictly legal, if they didn't do that much, they'd be overtaken in no time.

A member of their ranks, Basyle was a woman whose brown skin and light blond hair served as her characteristics. Equipped with a bladed cane one couldn't say for certain was a spear or a staff, she wore the highly exposing attire of a dancer. Thinking of her location, it was quite improper, but that was merely proof of what was allowed at her level of ability.

... After that long trip through the forest, she was unscratched.

"Well, for these kids, I guess it's a passing grade?"

She made a decision as she looked over Rudel's group's camp. Of course, it

was a decision taking into account these were nobles on their first outing... by normal criteria, they were out of the question.

One of Basyle's fellow guards spoke.

"The lookouts've dozed off, the bonfire's about to go out... the way things are going, the folks around won't be getting any sleep."

He shrugged as he gave his judgement. Night was when the monsters were most active. It was the time period carrying the greatest danger.

"I'm glad I got to be a guard of this class. When all's said and done, we have the Arses house, and all manner of deep-pocketed nobles... the more incompetent they are, the more chances there are to get on the market."

To Basyle, if it would get her out of her day to day adventurer and guard position, then she had no problem with children. She even thought it fine to present her body.

"But... that Rudel's surprisingly decent. Those idiot information dealers have thrown off my plans."

The guards had thought Rudel would be completely useless in command. But his surprising tenacity had lessened their roles. She had wanted to have sold a favor by now...

"I'll have to return this debt of false information... but it really is strange. From what I've seen, he's reasonably talented."

Swordplay, magic, and battle... from the eyes of the guards, Rudel was decent. As he was in a difficult commanding role, his slipups stood out... but even so, you could say he passed. If he said he wanted to join her party, then pure ability-wise, she wouldn't have a problem with it.

"He's panicking, but from the surrounding reactions, he isn't hated too much. He's a fine article."

Basyle included, the guards' evaluations were surprisingly high... and they had been paid for another job. They were also the graders for this event.



While he was receiving such a high evaluation, Rudel himself felt impatience

at the uncanny situation. On the third day, he confronted the reality he hadn't even made it half of the planned distance, and that his class was completely exhausted. Not from the monsters... they could raise an arm or leg to this unfamiliar forest environment.

"Why aren't we getting anywhere!?"

Those around felt fear at Rudel's irritation. Angering the eldest son of one of the Three Lords was something their parents told them to avoid by all means. The atmosphere naturally took a turn for the worse...

"Rudel... everyone's doing their best in an unfamiliar environment. And there's just a little more to go to the destination point. We're halfway there."

"And there's still half to go. At this rate, we really are coming in last..."

Rudel didn't care about appearance. He really only cared about the grade. While she noticed that, Izumi knew just how seriously Rudel was aiming to be a dragoon, leaving her unable to say anymore.

The two of them hung their heads as they thought over what was to come. At that moment.

"W-what's that!?"

Rudel and Izumi raised their faces. In the direction one of their classmates pointed, they could see the large, black shadow of a monster. Its red eyes looked upon Rudel and the rest of the class as prey...

Chapter 8: The Boy, the Boar, and Classmates

The monster in the shape of a boar; its eyes let off an ominous red light as it raised a war cry. With his classmates that couldn't even move to his back, Rudel channeled the Mana circulating around his body, using his swords to receive its charge. And Izumi who managed to react tried cutting her katana into the boar, but...

"Wha! It's too hard to cut!"

The katana blade chipped, and unable to endure the impact, Rudel was sent flying. The boar used its hind legs to scratch at the ground a number of times... before charging at Rudel once more. His body crashing into the trees, Rudel could feel the pain spread through it.

"Kuh!"

This time, Rudel avoided it and fired off magic at the boar. Elementary magics of fire and wind did hit their mark head on, but the boar emerged without any injury.

"You're on!"

Regaining his stance, Rudel faced the boar. Seeing his form, a number of students gave a delayed response, attacking with magic, and the weapons in their hands.

Numbers were strength... but the monster wasn't weak enough to be suppressed by an exhausted class and injured Rudel.

Rudel hadn't given up. The dragoon were the strongest in Courtois. That meant if he lost he would have no future. A dragoon's loss would be the defeat of the country... the information from some book he had read before revived in his head.

The tusks protruding from the boar's splendid lower jaw came up at Rudel...

Wringing out the power in his body, Rudel swung his sword. As a result... the boar's fang stuck into the ground, but Rudel lost the battle of power, and was sent through the air once more. Its tusk broken, the boar came at Rudel in a

frenzy. When it was already difficult to stand, avoiding a body blow from the charging beast.

“Right, that’s as far as you go.”

Alongside a voice, the guards in the rear attacked at once. Their magic burned the boar, their swords and spears cut and pierced it... Rudel and his classmates were shown just how far their powers differed.

It was all over in an instant. An enemy they couldn’t even raise a hand against... before the guards who defeated it in an instant, Rudel’s heart was filled with humiliation. Shame that the swordplay and magic he had polished served no purpose at all, shame at the reality that he would’ve died had he not been saved.

It all filled Rudel with an intolerable vexation.



“Withdraw? Don’t be stupid! Having come this far, we can’t just withdraw!”

The words Izumi sent Rudel as he pulled himself to his feet: ‘Let’s withdraw’. Unable to see his surroundings through his shame and irritation, Rudel opposed.

“Rudel...”

Izumi hung her head. Perhaps sensing Rudel’s feelings, she couldn’t say any more.

“Just a little more to go...”

Right, it wasn’t long to the destination point... only halfway more. They really had no choice but to withdraw. Exhausted classmates and injured Rudel. A continuation would be putting lives on the line.

Seeing Rudel, Basyle thought.

(Reality’s a harsh mistress. If that monstrosity didn’t show up, perhaps he’d make it to the goal... well, it’s only natural a kid can’t make decisions under these circumstances.)

From a guard’s point of view, Basyle had determined any continuation was

impossible, and had sent some ahead to inform the teachers. All that was left was to make Rudel give up. Telling herself that keeping a child company any longer would be a pain, she had already given up on selling herself to him.

A lord without judgement was just what Basyle wanted. But...

"W-we can go just a little further, right?"

"T-that's right, we can do it!"

"It's just a little more, so stay firm."

Looking over Izumi and Rudel, the classmates said it of their own accord. Was it to protect themselves, or were they mindful of Rudel? No one could say.

But those classmates had finally entered Rudel's eyes. It was there that he finally understood they weren't in a state to continue on. There was no helping the injuries, but their weapons were in tatters, and he could spy ragged faces. Going on any further would be dangerous...

Rudel made a fist with his right hand. And after a while, he undid it and declared...

"Our class is... withdrawing."



"Hmm, he's surprisingly decent."

In a separate place, Basyle gave her impression of Rudel. Seeing the young nobles persist was a surprise, but the fact Rudel resolved to withdraw upon seeing them was also praiseworthy.

Basyle shrewdly held the boar tusk Rudel had severed in her hand.

For some reason, the rest had turned to a black mist and faded. This tusk alone became the only proof of the existence of that abnormal boar... but that tusk looked exceptionally beautiful to Basyle. Almost like a first-rate material. She ended up putting it away in her own bags.

By school regulations, she wasn't supposed to save them unless they were on the brink. The guards wouldn't lift a hand unless the students showed a desire to be helped. She had used that timing to rescue them in time, but... she didn't know if it would get her employment on good terms.

If Rudel persevered a bit more...



"I'm saying I can walk..."

Having taken a strong blow to the body, Rudel borrowed a shoulder from Izumi and Basyle as he walked. At first, he had pushed himself to move by his own feet, but his body instantly raised screams. His bodily fatigue from using Mana, and the bruising across his body were simply too great.

"If you walk and fall behind the others, what are you going to do? We'll be there soon, so just hold out."

"As expected of the eldest son of the Arses House, but... you're body's crying out."

Izumi was earnestly worried, while Basyle was trying to use her prided body as a weapon to approach Rudel... borrowing those shoulders of varied intent, he arrived at the forest's exit.

Looked upon from the side, it was a truly envious sight to behold. The other guards were also buttering up the young nobles to sell their services.

Right, when looked at from the side, it looked as if Rudel was being waited on by beauties.

And as bad luck would have it, Aleist's class had just reached the goal by their own strength. Seeing Rudel's ragged class, Aleist's class took on a condescending attitude. The fact they reached the goal on their own had inflated their egos a bit.

"You lot withdrew? The hell are you doing in this forest of nothing but small fries?"

"What pitiful folk. Those noble disgraces..."

"Aleist, you say something too."

Someone in class called out to Aleist. To Aleist, this was an event where Rudel had exhausted out his own class. He was a defeatist who would say, 'I knew from the start we would never reach the goal'. He remembered the scene coming out in the event. And Rudel with a flower in both arms had appeared in

the event as well.

By Aleist's memory, idiotic Rudel retired, borrowing the shoulders of a beautiful guard and the number one beauty in the class, 'Izumi Shirasagi', as he boldly made his way out... he surely recalled it.

In this event, the protagonist would remain uninvolved. But Aleist's desires came out. He wanted to give Izumi and the beautiful guard a good impression...

"When you've retired and withdrawn, you've got a flower on each arm... are you looking down on it all? Why not think about the trouble you're causing those around you."

On those words, the jeers from Aleist's class began to get to Rudel's class' heads. When they had risked their lives facing a dangerous monster along the way... was there really a need to mock them so? ... Rudel let go of Izumi and Basyle's shoulders, coming out in front of Aleist.

"It's true that we withdrew, but we ran into a dangerous monster. And I understand that I'm troubling people."

Rudel knew he had exhausted his class, and on top of that, he had intended to urge them to continue on. But Aleist was referring to the two beauties.

"Hmm, what sort of monster was it?"

Rudel explained to Aleist. It was a ferocious boar monster, with a black body, white crest, and red eyes... once he finished explaining its characteristics, Aleist burst into laughter.

"There's no way such a monster spawns in this forest, fool. Listen here, if such a dangerous monster was here, this outing would never be held. You're just embarrassing yourself when you make such an excuse without understanding that basic fact."

Once he had finished his piece, Aleist sent a glance to Izumi and Basyle before leading off his classmates. Both of their faces seemed to say, the hell's he on about?

"I-I'm sorry, Rudel."

"We'll try harder next time."

"To think they wouldn't believe it... should I explain it to the teachers?"

As Rudel stood stock still, his classmates sent some comforting words. But Rudel looked on in surprise at the fact Aleist's class had barely suffered any injury at all. When his own group got injured simply by walking through the forest... Rudel could only feel more ashamed of himself.

He surely could have prepared more. If he had started gathering the information and equipment from the moment he was left in charge of the class... Rudel turned to his classmates. He looked over them all.

"Everyone, this time was my slipup. I'm sorry... but if you'll still allow me to take command next time, I'll definitely bring our class to the goal. No, we'll be first! Next time, we'll aim for number one! So could you please leave next time to me... I know I'm asking for a lot here, but please!"

As Rudel lowered his head, those around were confused. They were certain he would lay the blame on them... from the class, one, and then another raise a voice of approval. Of course, the first one was Izumi.

Chapter 9: The Boy and the Elf Girl

In a place that lay through a dimly lit alley, an old man who specialized in materials ran his business. Bringing her feet there, Basyle had brought the ‘Boar Tusk’ she had obtained in her last job. The old man enthusiastically appraised the tusk she declared as a first rate material.

“... Where did you get your hands on this? It’s the first time I’ve ever seen something like it.”

“That’s a secret... so how much?”

Without asking any more, the old man simply gave a sigh. He had been acquainted with Basyle for a few years now, and while she was definitely skilled, it was questionable whether or not she had the ability to bring in a material of this caliber.

“In hardness and magical properties... it’s all fairly high. ‘Whoever’ cut it off was considerably skilled.”

Spewing some casual cynicism, she lay some money on the counter. Seeing that, Basyle tried a number of times to bargain up the price... at the end, she settled at the, ‘exact price the old man was expecting’.

“Is it really that amazing?”

“As a material, yes. If you can obtain them in large quantities, I’d welcome it.”

Basyle recalled Rudel. He had skill and money, and on top of that he was a future archduke... should I seriously try to seduce him? She earnestly mulled over it.

“And you’d better be careful. I’m not sure what you did to that information dealer, but they’re sniffing around you now.”

“Hah? They handed me some fake information, so I just had them return my money.”

The old man sighed once more. He proceeded to explain a few things to her. About Basyle’s own fighting style and preferences... they had begun giving out

her information cheap, even free of charge... and next they'd leak bad rumors about her so no one would party with her again... after he had said that much, Basyle knew something had to be done.

It was her fault for making light of the information dealers.

"You've done too much. If you aggravate them too much and get them sniffing for real, it'll get harder to work around these parts. Didn't you ever learn that? That you'll regret looking down on them... I won't say anything, but you'd better wash your feet of this business. You can still make it in time... in various ways."

Basyle could feel the air towards her worsening ever-so-slightly. She decided it was dangerous to continue on with this job.



"My body hurts."

A few days passed since the events of that forest, and Rudel lay on a bed in the academy's infirmary... even if it was called that, it was a facility on the scale of a small hospital. Pain raced around his whole body, and while the healing magic was working, it just went to show it wasn't omnipotent.

"It's because you pushed yourself. If we didn't have healing magic, you wouldn't be able to move for a month."

Izumi stayed by Rudel's side, peeling off the skin of a fruit in the chair by his bed. She wasn't skilled at the task by any means, but she wasn't bad. And like that, she handed the fruit over to Rudel.

"I'll be discharged in two to three days. And then I'll have to retrain myself from the ground up."

"That's the spirit. But get some rest for now."

As they were conversing, the door to the infirmary suddenly opened.

"It's been a while, Rudel-sama."

The one who entered with those words was Basyle. A get-well gift in her hands... how thoughtful, Rudel thought. But Izumi was put on guard. She didn't think too highly of Basyle approaching Rudel.

“I thought only relevant personnel could enter the academy.”

On each of her words, a thorn did take shape, but

“I came to report this and that about my guard duty, little lady. And are you alright, Rudel-sama? If only I’d saved you sooner, or so my chest’s been aching.”

Basyle face a shameless excuse. She showed no reaction to Izumi’s cynicism. Izumi was put even further on guard... but Rudel...

“I-I see...”

His eyes were stolen by Basyle’s clothes that were even lighter than when she was on guard duty. Izumi ended up sighing. And intrigued by his reaction, Basyle went and brought her face closer to his.

“Wha!”

“O-oy...”

Rudel’s eyes ended up wandering to all sorts of places. And Basyle...

“If you find this body to your liking... you can do whatever you want with it.”

On those words, Rudel showed a reaction beyond what even he could have imagined. His body tried to leap at Basyle on its own... but he was still in pain all over. Any sudden movements in such a state...

“GYAAAAH!!!”

Of course, it hurt, and writhing around in pain was also painful. Basyle was surprised at that reaction, and ended up parting from Rudel. Seeing him, Izumi spoke.

“You’re partly to blame for that one.”

She pat his body for him.



“Hire you? Even if you ask me to hire you while I’m at the academy, well... and when it comes to guards, the knights and soldiers on campus are enough.”

After Rudel’s pain had softened, Basyle started into her objective of selling herself. Rudel had seen her strength as an adventurer, and she understood her

own charm... but Rudel showed disapproval.

To Rudel, he didn't want to have any servants while in the academy. Those feelings ended up coming out... it was largely due to the fact he had no good memories with servants, but more than that, he was already managing on his own.

"I-in that case... right, magic! I'll teach you the practical uses of magic!"

As she frantically thought over various things, those words she randomly let slip from her mouth gave Izumi a bad premonition. As Izumi understood Rudel's personality, she had conviction he would hire her.

"Really!? That magic that burnt the boar in the forest really did surprise me. I couldn't think of it as the same magic I was using... is it possible for me too?"

Finding her foothold, Basyle began building a market for herself to a level of overkill. Correcting her posture, and lowering her head...

"Leave it to me. Magic, especially offensive magic is my specialty. I'll bring your abilities to a level you can use in real combat."

"Then I'll hire you! No, in this instance, I'm the one asking you to teach me. Based on how my body recovers, could you stop by every day, morning and evening?"

"... Eh? E-every day? Morning and evening? ... By morning, do you mean around the seventh bell?"

Basyle suddenly made a reluctant face... she was no good with mornings. More than being a person of the night, she enjoyed wandering around 'til dawn...

"The fifth bell, perhaps? Based on the season, it may be the fourth... is that no good? Then unfortunate as it may be, I don't have the time for..."

To Basyle, the academy was a safe zone. In a situation where the information dealers had a constant grasp of her location, on top of receiving wages that included guard fees as well, being a supposed servant of an archduke house would let her live in the academy without any further inconvenience... she instantly put the job details on the scales and came to a conclusion.

"No, if Rudel-sama wishes it, I shall instruct you at any hour."

"Thank you!"

"..."

Rudel was delighted, but Izumi wasn't making the best of faces. Basyle went right on to being hired as Rudel's servant. Staff lodging was prepared for her, and so she ended up living there.



In his room, Aleist thought over what was to come. Looking at the notes he had written in Japanese when he was still a young boy, he grinned when he considered his own future.

"After this, there's the third term's inter-class completion. There, there'll be an event where Izumi falls for me... and next year, the 'Second Princess Fina' and 'Chlust' will enter the academy. Chlust is going to become archduke soon, so I have to raise his impression of me while I can! It'll be useful in the war event."

He had written down various things, up to the war arc in the final chapter. In its contents, Rudel stopped coming out partway... no, at the end, Rudel's end was vaguely detailed.

'Desperate to flee from the war, Rudel incurs casualty on his own allies as he takes flight... he tries seeking help from the enemy general, but he is killed, bringing the matter to a close.'

It had been written under the title, 'Chlust Friendship Event'.

"But Millia... we've had a number of opportunities to meet, but she won't even look me in the face."

Thinking he had failed in Millia's event, Aleist drew a line through the 'Millia Love Event' sentence in his notes, and erased it.

"But whatever."



The elf girl in question was busy thinking about Rudel, who she had met on

her entrance to the school. From there, a considerable amount of time had gone by, but even now she couldn't get him out of her head. As he had raised a number of problems in the academy, Rudel was a sort of celebrity.

And every time she heard rumor of Rudel, Millia would grow desperate to contain her feelings. Rudel was unpopular with commoners and non-human races... you could even say he was hated. The reason being he was the eldest son of the notorious Arses House.

Looking down on demi-humans, and taking too much, or rather just taking from its people.

But Millia couldn't think Rudel was the same person from the rumors. Rudel's rumors... he tried to push himself onto an elf girl the first day, and within the day, he tried to sneak into the girls' dorm. After that, he forcibly called out to all the female students of the campus... when she thought over that one, it went to her head.

"And he didn't even call out to me..."

There were other rumors spreading, and all of them labeled Rudel as a terrible person. But if you asked the people around him, you'd get a different reaction back.

Rudel's class would never badmouth him. Perhaps it was due to his status, but even so, they didn't talk behind his back. Rudel is working hard, he never looks down on anyone... that was all she'd ever hear.

"Just which one is the real you..."

Millia breathed out a sigh... seeing her figure, her roommate offered a line.

"Millia... that lass be in love."

Chapter 10: The Samurai Girl's Dream and the Boy

The academy grew busy as it entered its third term. Its graduate classes with their futures... while its enrolled students put zeal into the inter-class tournament.

"Well then, Rudel-kun and Izumi-san, next is..."

It was the same in Rudel's class. Those with good grades, or who the teachers saw as competent were asked to represent their class. It was possible to decline, but few ever did. Participating as a representative of one's class was generally seen as an honor.

An honor for the nobles, and a chance for the commoners to get their names out there.

Class had ended, and it was already decided Rudel would be one of the participating members. At present, he was reading a book in the afterschool classroom. As he had to return a library book today, he planned to read and return it before returning to the dorm.

Rudel was living a fulfilling life at the academy. From the early morning, in a terrible state without even her hair in order, Basyle would teach him the practical uses of magic, and those around him had begun talking to him without restraint.

To Rudel's side, Izumi was similarly reading a book in the classroom. Throughout the third term, she had continued acting alongside him. But rather than reading the book... she was looking at Rudel.

From Izumi's eyes, Rudel was a strange, but upfront person. He declared he would become the strongest dragoon in the country, and his form as he endeavored was quite likable. What's more, her school life had been saved by him on the first day. Izumi thought of Rudel as something beyond a good friend.

... Not that Rudel could tell.

Rudel finished reading his book, placing it down on the desk. As he did, he struck up a conversation with Izumi.

"The inter-class tournament... our first match is with Aleist's class, right?"

As Rudel suddenly started into the topic, Izumi panicked inside.

"Y-yeah... are you anxious after all?"

"Anxious? No, if possible, I want to fight Aleist. Just how far have I grown, what am I lacking... if I fight Aleist-the strongest in our year-perhaps I'll understand it. And... if I'm doing it, I'm going for the win."

To Rudel, defeat held no meaning. He could just stand up again. But more meaningless than that was a victory without any benefit.

Rather than fighting a weakling and winning, fighting someone strong and losing held more value to the current Rudel. Right now, he was in a learning environment, and this was a match...

"You're always so optimistic, Rudel... I'm envious."

As Izumi looked down, Rudel tried asking what had been on his mind all this time.

"What do you have your sights on, Izumi? You came to this academy because you have a goal, right?"

Izumi started speaking, a little embarrassed. Izumi's dream was to gain knight status in Courtois... and not just any ordinary status. Above the standard knights, she wanted to be part of the elites generally known in Courtois as high knights... it was a lot on the shoulders of a foreigner like Izumi, but even so, she was sent to help out her brother, and the rest of her house that would follow behind.

High knight wasn't a one-generation position. In Courtois that valued accepting in new blood, it would mean obtaining noble status. But the examinations and standards were set as high as you'd expect.

"Why do you want knight status in Courtois? Isn't your house a knight house in your country?"

Rudel wasn't too knowledgeable on foreign affairs. At most, he understood diplomatic relations. He couldn't understand why Izumi wanted to become a knight in Courtois.

"... We lost the coup. My clan can no longer get involved with politics. And the persecution may get worse... in short, we want to emigrate. But even so, my clan is a line of military men. If we get a high knight out of our family, it won't just be a temporary knight status, our clan will be recognized as a knight lineage."

The difference between dragoon and high knight; while high knights didn't ride dragons onto the front lines, they were a defensive role, a shield that protected the important figures of the country. If the dragoon were the spear, they were also one of the essential existences in Courtois.

"They'll tell you to abandon your country, and swear loyalty to Courtois. You'll be casting aside the country you were born in... does your clan have that level of resolve?"

"You ask some harsh things... yes, we have the resolve. That's why I'll become a high knight. If do end up being a high knight and gaining noble status, I may become trouble to the Arses House."

Rudel thought it was about simple factional relations. Serving under a high ranking noble was only natural for the younger houses. Even if you lined up ideals, no matter how talented your house may be, you wouldn't be able to survive if you made an enemy of the larger noble houses.

"I see, I'll support you, and I'll support your clan. But that is my individual position... if you're going to come under someone's umbrella, then you'd better refrain from the Arses house. You'll only taint the status you went to such lengths to obtain."

It was Rudel's turn to hang his head. The Arses house's affiliated nobles were leaving one after the next. Its internal affairs were in shambles, and it would take quite some time for it to rebuild. A waning house... that was the Arses House.

"Aren't you the next head? Then someday..."

"As long as he lives, my father will never hand his status over to me. I'm sure he's still got a few decades in him... I do feel sorry for the people, but that's another reason I want to be a dragoon. You see, Izumi, that's the sort of man I am. Someday, I'll become a feudal lord and stick my hands in internal affairs..."

but I have no idea whether I can better the Arses territory in my lifetime."

Rudel was aware of his own selfishness. He was abandoning his suffering people to become a dragoon. But even so, he wanted to be a dragoon.

"..."

"You should go search for a noble to support you while you can. Luckily, there are two other eldest sons from the Three Lords here, and there are a few folks from Marquis Houses enrolled."

"... Yeah. Perhaps you're right."

As the classroom dyed orange in the setting sun, the two of them stood and returned to their own dorms. Izumi was just a little saddened. If she asked Rudel whether he'd become a dragoon, or take her, then surely he'd choose dragoon without hesitation. It was clear enough...

And it was because she could understand how serious Rudel was... that she would try her best. She renewed her resolve.



The character called Izumi in Aleist's secret notes was a Yamato Nadeshiko, and a young girl at the mercy of her clan. In her love event, an important choice where you told her she didn't have to be held down by her house was the key.

Izumi was 'unable to become a high knight', and by her clan's decision, she was to become the mistress of a high ranking noble, only for the protagonist to swoop in and rescue her. Looking at that information, Aleist lay in his room as he talked to himself.

"We're almost at the tournament event, and Izumi's events are going to start... but honestly, Vargas is a dubious character. I'm not particularly proceeding his events, but I guess it doesn't matter."

Aleist held no interest in the country boy Vargas. Vargas, an older brother-like character... but Aleist planned to fill out his party with women. It felt idiotic to let Vargas take up his time.

So he thought.

By the way, Izumi's partner was to be Rudel of the Arses House. Perhaps the

two were bound by a strange sort of fate.

Chapter 11: The Boy, the Sword Idiot, and the Magic Idiot

In the academy first two compulsory years, the class tournament was the largest of events. Before it was held, the number of people training in the morning increased. And in the boys' dorms, two to three times the usual number of students were practicing their swords and magics so early in the morning.

"There are a lot of them today."

Rudel finished up his practice, and as he looked around, he was impressed by the abnormal number of people. But Vargas,

"Give them two to three days, and the number will half. Just working hard during the tournament period won't get you anywhere. More importantly, is Miss Basyle here yet?"

Basyle was teaching him the practical uses of magic in battle. But she was terrible in the mornings. She rarely ever arrived on time. Even if she came, her hair was a mess, and her clothing would consist of a jersey-like garb that held not a shred of the appeal of her usual clothing... but even so, she was quite popular with the boys who training in the morning.

"It seems she hadn't been wandering around at night lately, but she's still bad with mornings."

"Ah~, how unfortunate... the sway of her breasts through those clothes is magnificent!"

Rudel was amazed to see a number of nods from the boys around. At this point, he could only laugh.

"More importantly! You have to do your best in the tournament. Based on your results, those affiliated with the knight brigades may set their eyes on you."

Right, the purpose of the tournament, alongside confirming the quality of the students, was to spot out pupils with promising futures. Nabbing them at the

bud was its real intent.

"Y-yeah!"

Rudel was the sort who would put in more effort than usual if it would let him approach his dream. But sadly... perhaps you could call it fate. His opponent was Aleist, the strongest in the year.



As the academy welcomed in the first day of the tournament, the class representative gathered in the arena for the opening address before retiring to the waiting room. The room was wrapped in a peculiar sense of tension.

"Oh, the winner was from the class with the most commoners... as I thought, those noble classes sure are frail."

The one who let out such provocative words wasn't a representative of a commoner class. He was an individual who no one could caution no matter what he said... Eunius Diade, hailing from one of the Three Lords much like Rudel. Boasting a large body, Eunius had his personal large wooden sword over his back.

Blond hair bundled up behind, his blue eyes made him out as more of a ferocious animal than a noble... while he was abysmally bad at his magic classes, in swordsmanship, he had even surpassed Rudel to take the first spot. But as Eunius had never directly gone up against Rudel, he had some complaints about that ranking.

"How noisy... if you love commoners so much, then just go off and become one. We don't need any trash that can't fulfill a noble's obligations."

The one who directed those complaints at Eunius was similarly from a Three Lord House. Luecke Halbades' near-transparent pale skin and red eyes peer through his straight blond hair.

Ranked number one in magic... though he had never directly compared himself to Rudel, so Luecke himself had some dissatisfactions about it.

No one could step into the conversation between these too... or at least that's how it was supposed to be...

"How about the two of you calm down? We're going to fight either way."

The one who acted without reading the mood was a certain Aleist Hardie. If Rudel had said it, no one would complain. Rudel was also of the Three Lords. And the two of them were clearly conscious of him.

But Aleist was called the strongest in the school year... and he had interest in the two. So they continued on their conversation.

"The eldest son of the Hardie House, eh... what do you want to say by intruding on our conversation?"

Luecke's cold eyes glared at Aleist. Neither Luecke nor Eunius thought too highly of him. They had much to think about the Hardie house that had suddenly extended its influence and rose before anyone realized it, but more than anything, they couldn't stand Aleist's abnormal level of competence.

Aleist's grades weren't at the top. He had points deducted due to his attitude during lessons. Yet with that taken into account, Aleist still managed to stay around the upper ranks... there's no way he wasn't suspicious.

The two of them were individuals who never failed to put effort into their sword and spell. And they had talent. That's precisely why they could tell... that he was downright shady... on the contrary, the one their instincts told them to fear was Rudel. The boy who managed to grind out grades catching up to them in both fields with pure, untainted effort.

The two of them knew Rudel was the one they had to be wary of.

"If you're curious of each other's strength, then you'll know once you fight. It'll be much more productive than any pointless conflict here."

"You say some nice things! That's just the sort of opinion I like... Oy, Arses! What do you think?"

Eunius suddenly turned the subject to Rudel. Eunius and Luecke both turned to face him, and finally Aleist looked as well. Feeling the three of them were strong, Rudel knew he would reach a greater fight if he fought against them.

But if you asked him what he thought, it would be troubling. To Rudel, any dealings before the match would be a hindrance. For now, he just wanted to

concentrate on the battle. And he knew the two were looking at him. He was sure their words were meant to provoke him...

"Nothing in particular... I simply want to become strong. Strong enough to be a dragoon."

"I see, then you're a failure as a noble. You're not fulfilling an obligation fitting of your status."

When he heard that from Luecke of one of the Three Lord houses, Rudel felt the weight of his selfishness. Right, normally, Rudel wouldn't have the leisure to aim at becoming a dragoon. It was an action akin to abandoning the suffering people of the Arses territory.

"If being a noble's to live freely, then Arses' right. Living free's his family motto, after all!"

Eunius provoked him. Rudel quietly closed his mind. Finding it hard to look at, Izumi tried to call out, but

'The next match shall soon commence! Will the class representatives please get ready!'

On the orders that came from the broadcasting equipment, Rudel stood... Those of Aleist's class stood as well, exiting the waiting room and heading for the arena.



Once Rudel and the others had left the waiting room, Luecke and Eunius continued talking. The Halbades and Diade houses didn't get along by any means. They each stood at the top of their own large faction. But right now, they were deep in talk about Rudel.

"What do you think?"

On Eunius' vague question, Luecke,

"Aleist's honestly abnormal. But Rudel's also a monster."

"Right... swordplay second only to me, and magic skills surpassing even you... think you could win if you made an enemy of him?"

"I think you mean swordplay surpassing you, and magic second to me. If I could beat him so easily, we wouldn't be having this conversation... but I don't know whether he can beat Aleist or not."

While there was a disparity in their recognition of the situation, their opinions aligned. It would be difficult for Rudel to defeat Aleist. But that was just how abnormal Aleist was.

"Rune knight, rune blade... there are various ways to say it, but a magic knight's greatest trait is 'Magic Sword', a fighting style where they imbue magic into their blade. The amount of time he can grant it to a wooden sword can't be long... but Rudel's at too much of a disadvantage."

"Is it really that amazing? He's just covering his sword in magic, right?"

Eunius doubtfully listened to Luecke's explanation.

"Are you an idiot? If he coats his wooden sword in fire or something, you'll be burnt just by locking blades. If he raises the output, Rudel'll be burnt black..."

"... Now that's terrible. But there's a way to counteract it."

"There is?"

"Cut him down before he can hit you... are you an idiot?"

Perhaps they got along surprisingly well.

Chapter 12: The Boy, the Match, and the Red Girl

Taking on a student of Aleist's class, both sides fought mainly with swordplay. Unable to block her swift movements and cuts, the student was made a sport of by Izumi before she thrust her wooden sword at his nape... cheers came in from the audience seats.

Izumi had won. The referee directed his flag at her, and abiding by it, Izumi put her wooden sword away. The scene was looked upon by the knights in the noble visitor seats. A number of high knights, and two dragoons... within all that, a single young girl stuck her feet out in front, throwing them down on top of the table. Her red hair extended to her shoulders, and she played with its curling ends. Her pale skin and red eyes were exceptionally beautiful.

But her attitude was a problem. Her posture was bad, and her feet were on the table, after all... the surrounding knights directed her, directed Cattleya Nianis a glance. The one who apologized in her place was the vice-captain of the dragoons sitting to her side.

She hadn't become a dragoon by her own design. It was by the talent she was born with, and unlike the ashen dragons kept in Courtois, she was a genius who was able to make a contract with a bonafide Red Dragon.

The green scales of the Wind Dragon. The golden scales of the Gaia Dragon, and the smooth sea-blue scales of the water dragon... they were all colors that wouldn't come out in domesticated dragons. All dragons born in captivity would come out with ashen scales.

And with ashen dragons, their quality dropped from their wild counterparts.

Cattleya mocked the fact the vice-captain shared a contract with an ashen dragon. So even if he cautioned her, she wouldn't correct her posture. And Cattleya was trusted by the royal line. That only made her needlessly conceited.

"Nothing but boring matches. Can I go home yet?"

The vice-captain had just about had it with her, but he showed some self-control.

"I'm sure you know, Cattleya, but discerning future candidates for our unit is our job."

"None of those brats are anything to write home about. Like that black-haired lady from before, she'll make high knight, at best."

On those words, the nearby high knights seethed. But they were first-rate knights. Even if words may anger them, they wouldn't raise a hand. Though from the vice-captain's point of view, it was akin to a direct attack to his gut.



The next match was finally Rudel's turn. Aleist across from him showed an expression of leisure, but to contrast, Rudel was the epitome of seriousness.

"Now it's time to punish an arrogant noble... any complaints?"

"Whether I'm arrogant or not is... no, I am arrogant. I've no complaints, but I want you to take me on seriously."

"That so... but are you worth my all?"

Alongside the referee's call of the start, both sides stepped forwards.

The gap closed in an instant, and the wood swords that met let off a violent sound no wood should make. Seeing Rudel take on his attack, Aleist panicked a bit, and seeing through that, Rudel went on the offense.

As Aleist took some distance, Rudel cast offensive magic. He let out a consecutive stream of elementary magics, not giving Aleist a chance to chance to attack... but Aleist

"Don't get carried away!!!"

Tried to fire advanced magic within the arena. From Rudel's point of view, he was full of openings, and it was a terrible move. He instantly fired a bolt of magic as he closed the distance and tried to bring things to close combat, but at that moment!

"Fool, I can see right through you!!"

Aleist's sword was imbued with the magic of wind. While Rudel parried his attack, he was still blown violently into the air.



"Amazing... I never imagined we'd see a fight of this level in the fundamental curriculum."

"Aleist's as much a monster as they say."

"But that Arses house kid hanging on against him is quite something himself..."

Such a conversation passed through the noble visitor room. The high knights were in high spirits, and the vice-captain's heart was already dancing over the exploits of these newbie fighters. But Cattleya alone was different.

(How irritating... the hell's this match? It's just one brat with nothing but power up against another idiot who's trained in all the wrong places!)

She would be able to take them both down in an instant. While Cattleya was convinced, she sent a sharp glare at Rudel. She didn't like him... that was the impression Cattleya held of Rudel.

"Rudel of the Arses House. I hear he's trying to become a dragoon... as things are going, perhaps he has a possibility."

On those words from a high knight, the blood rushed to Cattleya's head. That one will rise to the same position as me? Don't joke around! That one's no good! Definitely not happening!!

At this point, she didn't even understand what was no good. She seriously watched on the match between Rudel and Aleist.



The magic Aleist channeled into his wood sword... by the magic of wind, Rudel was being pushed back. If he tried to parry any strikes, he would be sent flying, and even if he dodged, the wind would destroy his stance. Firing magic as he ran was the greatest offense he could put up.

"Hah, hah... it's just as Basyle said. The quality of one's magic always falls further than anticipated in combat. At this rate, even firing seems pointless."

Rudel recalled Basyle's instruction. There, he decided to take a gamble. All his magic at point-blank range... even with elementary magic, at point blank, and if he put enough power into it...

Aleist looked over Rudel, an expression of leisure on his face. He understood what Rudel was going for.

"Hmm, you intend to stake it on a single strike? Sounds good... I'll take it head on, so come with all you've got!"

The force of the wind around Aleist's wood sword increased. Around its blade, a small tornado... that magic sword that was as if the twister itself had become a blade shocked the stands.

Holding that magic sword aloft, Aleist took his stance... in contrast, Rudel gathered mana on the palm of his right hand.

"W-wait, you two! We can't have any deaths here..."

Using the referee's call as the signal, the two sprung to motion. In Rudel's right hand, a magic of fire... Aleist gave a grin as he lowered his sword. But Rudel had prepared wind in his hidden left hand.

Using two magics at once was something you could call impossible during the academy's two fundament-centric years. Rudel couldn't handle it perfectly... but with the wind magic in his left hand, he changed the course of Aleist's magic sword, slamming his main right hand into Aleist himself. As a blast ran through the arena, the two of them were sent flying at roughly the same time... and the result was clear to everyone's eyes.



"Match over... that was quite interesting."

Cattleya had no interest in the vice-captain's words. She simply sent a glance to Rudel, collapsed in the arena. While Aleist managed to stand, Rudel was no longer able to. But even so, he frantically squirmed to get to his feet.

"In the end, their difference in ability came out... Aleist Hardie really is a monster."

As she heard that conversation in the background, Cattleya felt fear.

(Why hasn't anyone noticed? The real monster is that one! That Rudel Arses!!)

By Cattleya's evaluation, Rudel was the monster. While incomplete, he

showed skill in simultaneous magic manipulation, and whether it be swordplay or magic, he had completely outclassed Aleist in every field. The only reason Aleist won was the trumpcard called magic sword, and what seemed like an bottomless well of mana.

(But Rudel is still fifteen... he's at an age where he'll keep growing. The strength of his will that's still trying to force him to his feet... despite being shown such a difference in strength, he's still trying to stand!)

This kid would crawl his way up... Cattleya found herself in fear of Rudel. He did have a level of talent, but it wasn't to her level, and when it came to swordplay, his innate skill fell short of that black haired girl from before. But if they fought, Rudel would surely win.

That's why Cattleya thought... she was going to crush him...

Chapter 13: The Boy and Little Brother

Izumi and Basyle raced over to the collapsed Rudel. With teary eyes, they confirmed his safety. The referee declared Aleist the winner. But Rudel was still trying to stand.

“Not yet, I haven’t lost yet. I can still stand!”

“Rudel... that’s enough. Didn’t you say you wouldn’t have any regrets even if you lost!?”

“I don’t want to leave regret! That’s why I... can still...”

Looking over their exchange, Aleist smiled. It was almost time for Izumi’s event. Here, Rudel would order Izumi to cut at him... at Aleist. He would threaten her with her house’s standing

(And there, I say... What about your house!? Just do what you believe in! I say it to her. It’s the start of the event to release Izumi, who was ordered by her house to approach Rudel!!!)

But Izumi wouldn’t part from Rudel, and Rudel wouldn’t give out the order. Even more than that...

“You’re being unsightly, Rudel-sama. You lost... any more would be a disgrace.”

“... I... see... a disgrace... sure enough. It would be an insult to my foe... I admit... my defeat...”

Aleist couldn’t swallow down the situation. But Rudel gave a light smile before losing consciousness. The relief squad carried him off... and Izumi’s event never happened.



The first year division of the class tournament ended with an overall victory for Aleist’s class. Eunius’ and Luecke’s classes met in the semi-finals... it was a draw, or rather, it was declared impossible for anyone to continue. Both sides did a good job holding out that long...

Rudel's injuries took two weeks for a complete recovery... he was carried straight to the infirmary, and spent his time nursed to health by Izumi and Basyle... burn in hell!

By his discharge, Rudel's second year of fundamental education had begun.



"Chlust? Yes, he's my brother... something about him?"

In the second year of the standard curriculum, classes weren't shuffled up. From the third year onwards, it was nothing but chosen electives, so classes themselves didn't exist. So naturally, Izumi was still in Rudel's class.

"No... how should I put it, you give off a different atmosphere. Just like those around you say you're surprisingly decent, I've heard some voices that your little brother's quite nobleish."

Quite nobleish, the phrase contained some irony. But Rudel knew where she was coming from. His brother was loved and treasured by his parents. So Chlust had become a noble quite close to his parents... naturally, that would be a bad noble.

"So I'm not nobleish? That's all well and good, but is my brother that famous..."

"His grades are excellent, and his status is second highest in this year's entering class... but the first would have to be the second princess."

Rudel didn't know much about the second princess Fina. It was largely due to the fact he hadn't gone out into high society, but more than that, he just wasn't interested.

"What sort of kid is she?"

"... That's a hard one. If you want to call her cute, she's cute, and if you want to say she's beautiful, then she is... it seems your little brother's obsessed with Fina-sama. She's got blond hair and blue eyes, the standard Courtoisian set, and as I recall... they call her the 'doll princess'."

Right, unlike Rudel, Chlust had made his social debut. So fitting with the house's status, he had some exchanges with the princess. More importantly,

was ‘doll princess’... supposed to be a compliment? That was the part that caught Rudel’s interest.

“Chlust does have a chance... but I think it’ll be difficult.”

Rudel didn’t think Chlust would be married to that second princess. A declining house, and the precious princess... what’s more, with Chlust being the second son, it was even more unthinkable. No matter how talented Chlust was, it would probably be impossible unless he succeeded the Arses House...

“So you’re uninterested? I’m glad you’re the same as always. So what’s your goal going to be this year, Rudel?”

Izumi’s spirits rose a bit as she asked Rudel’s goal for the new semester. Rudel’s end goal wasn’t changing, so...

“I want to build up combat experience, and as I said in last time’s event, we’ll be the first to reach the goal. Also... I want to fight some strong people at the tournament, perhaps?”

After losing to Aleist, Rudel had done some thought on his own fighting style. He had considered learning Aleist’s magic sword, but... rather than whether it was possible or not, he thought over whether it was suitable for him, and gave up.

A dragoon’s main role was to compensate for the blind spots of a high-firepower flying tank called a dragon. Meaning protecting its back. It was written in a book that Magic Sword wasn’t suitable for dragoons. The reason being rather than swinging around a sword on its back, focusing on consecutive mid and long-range attacks was more important.

“Is that all? You’ll make all the women around you sad.”

Izumi impishly poked him with her elbow. Rudel had high grades, and he came from one of the Three Lord houses... there was no way he wasn’t popular.

“That is an exceedingly difficult problem. I’ve considered dating multiple women like my father before me...”

“You have!?”

Izumi’s eyes turned even more serious than usual, the ends of her words

increasing in intensity. Even Rudel could see she was angry.

"I determined it was impossible. I don't have any time, and I don't know what I'm supposed to do... and having multiple at once is unthinkable."

"R-right... while it's a bit strange, if it's you, I don't think there'll be any issu... wait! Like hell! Don't you have anything to say about feelings? Whether you like them or not?"

Rudel did have his likes and dislikes. But...

"With my status, I don't have the freedom to decide based on like and dislike. It's normal for me to be married to whatever partner my parents decide, and if I do have someone I love, then I'll have to make them a mistress... that isn't a position praised very highly."

Would you really make your loved one a social outcast? Is what he meant. The country of Courtois was prejudice against women with the positions of lover or mistress. So not being with your loved one was generally how it worked for Courtois' nobles.

"That's right... I'm sorry."

"You don't have to mind it. As long as I love the partner my parents choose, there won't be a problem... if that's possible, that is."

In a joking tone, Rudel explained to Izumi. Yet be that as it may, while Rudel did have interest in the female body, he had no memory of ever falling in love. Rather... he had simply never loved.

It was something extremely unnatural, and it felt somewhat contrived.



Ever since he came to the academy, Chlust was troubled by his brother Rudel. As the brother of Rudel who displayed such problematic behavior, the teachers were wary of him. On top of that, there was the matter of his grades... Rudel was even more proficient than him in every field. But his rankings on the practical events were never high.

By those with bad mouths, this would imply he, 'Bought his grades with money'. Chlust himself did believe that rumor, and he convinced himself he was

irrelevant to his brother. But if the big brother did it, and you tried to insist the little brother did not... it was only human to think the younger brother had bought his grades as well.

Because of that, Chlust got around to thinking he wasn't receiving a proper evaluation. He came to hate his brother even more than when he was in the house... and that would become yet another problem for Rudel.

Because that attitude around Chlust would only add to Rudel's terrible reputation. Just as he had been taught in his life at the Arses House, Chlust looked down on commoners and demi-humans. Ever since he came to hate Rudel, that mindset had only grown stronger.

Alongside those drawn to him by his status, he began running wild around the academy.

'And originally, that was precisely what Rudel was supposed to do.'



In his second year, if Rudel hadn't aspired to be a dragoon, he would be the worst of men. Not going to class, he would trouble all those around him. There were always women in his room through his money... he would take along the ill-natured students and run rampant through the academy.

What's more, upon losing to the protagonist in the tournament, he ordered Izumi to cut down the protagonist in retaliation, and her refusal became a spark... he was trash. And he was the trigger for many an event.

The 'Doll Princess' Fina challenged him on his behavior... in a frenzy, he ended up laying hands on her. As a result, Rudel was treated as a tumor of the academy, he was transferred from the five year track to the two year track, and he quietly left the school.

For the sake of face, he was granted knight qualifications, for argument's sake. After a long absence, his next appearance would come in the war arc, and that was all there was to the character called Rudel.

Chapter 14: The Boy and the Princess

The second princess Fina was an expressionless princess. As she was unable to express her emotions well, people took to calling her the Doll Princess. But rumor had it her beauty was number one in Courtois, and her beauty was such that the royal house kept a vigilant watch for a chance to marry her into the royalty of other lands.

... But that doll princess had a secret. She loved the feel of demi-human ears and tails! You could even say she loved demi-humans as a whole... But even now, the social standing of demi-humans was low in Courtois. If the princess was seen touching one in public, there would be many who wouldn't think too kindly of it. So she endured it.

Day after day after day... living in close quarters with demi-humans in the academy, she desperately held back.

But one day it did come to pass. As Fina dropped by the academy cafeteria, she bore witness to something outrageous. And she had finally reached the limits of her patience.

Two upperclassmen from the standard curriculum sat sandwiched around an underclassman from a class made up of commoners. The one sitting awkwardly between them was one Fina had already checked up on before, the cutest beast girl of the year, 'Mii of the White Cat Tribe'. Her lovely smile, and her petite body... Mii wasn't tall in stature. But that wasn't to say the white cat tribe were all of small build.

That's precisely why she was all the more valuable! ... In Fina's head, that is.

And despite her small body, Mii had her womanly features. She stuck out where she was supposed to stick out, and drew in where she should, another large factor behind her popularity. Mii was abnormally popular among the boys... and right now, she was entangled with some upperclassmen.

Her guard slash friend students took up a suspicious formation to hide her, and as she hesitated over what to do, the upperclassman made his move.

"But even so... I'm curious. Can I touch them?"

"I-if it's just a little, then... u-um...? You're still touching me?"

"Rudel? Isn't that enough... why don't you release her already? You've already finished asking what you wanted to, right?"

Right, the two upperclassmen were Rudel and Izumi. Rudel wanted to know how the beast tribes trained every day, so he went and asked Mii who happened to be nearby. But there, Something caught Rudel's interest... were those ears and tail truly real? Or were they a tribal ornament?

... His interested piqued, of course Rudel... touched them to confirm. But when it came to their feel to the touch... they were fluffy and soft. And Mii's eyes seemed to grow vacant with pleasure. Rudel continued feeling up... her ears and tail, trying out various methods. As a result,

"Ah! N-noooooaaaah!!!... Ah!"

After shaking a few time, Mii's body took a single big lurch. And she drooped onto the table... her breath was strangely rough. On top of that, her face was faintly reddened...

"Rudel... we need to talk. Let's go to the roof."

Izumi's mood worsened, and Rudel got the feeling he shouldn't go against her...

"G-got it. But leaving this child here is a bit..."

"You're right. Then I'll take her to the girls' dorm, so don't run away."

Looking over that exchange, Fina honestly didn't know what to do. But she got the feeling she had to take some sort of action.

(What was that technique!!? I'm freakin' envious, dammitttt!! Teach me your ways! Pass on your skills to me!! It'll be much more useful to my future than any of these useless classes!)

"You two! Get away from that girl! How env... I mean, aren't you embarrassed as upperclassmen!? (Thank you for the meal!!!)"

Fina came out in front of Rudel and Izumi. But Rudel didn't know about the princess. From her face and aura, Izumi knew who she was, but she didn't know

what to do.

Rudel, on the other hand,

"Who are you? If you're an acquaintance of hers, then could I leave her to you... I have to go to the roof, apparently."

The surroundings drew back at that brazen attitude. In that cafeteria with a large number of students around, the big reveal that he didn't know his own country's princess was a large problem, but even more than that, he left work to that princess... it was unthinkable.

But at that time, the prince was...

(He's totally a saint! Leaving this cute little kitten to me... hah, hah... I can barely contain myself!! I can touch her without reservations!!)

"Understood. I shall take responsibility and escort her. From here on, I pray you don't carry out such acts again. If such a thing is to happen once more... (Wait, huh? If I got him to do it again, could I get an excuse to touch?)"

The princess left for the girls' dorm, carrying Mii on her own. Completely ignoring the surrounding opinions, she carried her Mii all the way to the cat tribeswoman's room... feeling her fluff all the way! From then on, she became friends with Mii, and to Princess Fina, it was the best day of her life.



The morning of the next day, a satisfied Fina sat in the classroom, and the man who would always come in and flatter her... Chlust made his appearance. There, she remembered. Chlust's brother was Rudel of that godly technique!

"Chlust, is your older brother always like that?"

"Hah? Oh, that disgrace of the Arses name? I'm quite troubled by him too. I mean, he's like a child who speaks of nothing but dreams, never looking at the reality..."

From there, an endless stream of slander flowed from Chlust's mouth. Hearing that, Fina thought.

(This guy really is useless. Each and every day, his flattery is a right-out bother, and when I thought he could introduce me to the all-important master

Rudel... do I have any other connections?)

Yesterday, Fina had pet Mii all over. But... she couldn't do it like Rudel. No matter how she pet her, Mii would only say, 'That tickles'... she experienced the difference in ability between herself and Rudel firsthand, even feeling a sense of defeat. And she thought.

'I'll become his apprentice!'

And yet, the younger brother Chlust was of no use at all. Inside Fina's head, Chlust's stocks were plummeting at a rate never seen before. She had put up her expectations, but she was betrayed beyond her own imagination. Because of that, Fina grew even colder than usual towards him...

Questioning Fina's behavior, Chlust decided to look into various things. And the reason he reached was his brother Rudel. From his followers, Chlust learned of the events in the cafeteria the previous day.



The evening of that day... on the afterschool roof. With matters left unsettled the previous day, Izumi was conducting her lecture of Rudel.

"What do you have to say about yesterday?"

As Izumi said it coldly, Rudel responded with a serious face. Rudel had spent the whole night thinking over it. He repented over the bad points in his own way, and he thought he could get Izumi to understand him.

"I'm sorry. But I had confidence! You may laugh that I was too hasty, but I read a wonderful book on the art of petting dragons, and I've been practicing all this time. So I was sure that beast tribe girl would be delighted... I'll admit I've only ever tested it on my little sister and pet dog. But even so, I'm sure she enjoyed it!"

It was a remark from the left field... at Rudel's serious expression, Izumi's head began to hurt.

"... As if simple petting could lead to that! No, that's also important, but not knowing the princess of your own country... do you know the term *lese majeste*?"

"What's this about the princess? Right now, she's just an underclassman who attends our academy. If her surroundings are too mindful of her, it'll just wear her out... more importantly, I think my petting technique has reached a considerable level. My little sister praised it highly, and all. Do you want to have a go?"

For a brief instant, Izumi felt she would lose to the temptation. Rallying up her feelings, it was the moment she was to scold Rudel. The door connecting to the roof let out a violent sound as it opened, and leading a few dozen boys along, Chlust made his appearance.

"It's all your fault, Rudel! It's because you're dragging me down!"

Rudel and Izumi didn't know what was going on... but in chlust and the boys' hand, they gripped wooden swords and knives.

Chapter 15: The Boy and Events

Rudel and Izumi were surrounded on the school roof. They were surrounded by the followers of Rudel's brother Chlust, and all of them were underclassmen of the fundamental course department... new students who had only just enrolled and learned the basics. Just how many capable fighters were among them...

"Rudel... it's your fault my plans have gone to ruin. When I don't have the qualifications to succeed my house, the princess was my last hope! And yet you...!!"

Rudel couldn't understand Chlust's feelings. To Rudel, succeeding the house held very little interest. All he had was his will to become a dragoon... a dragon knight. The rest was unnecessary.

"Succeeding the house is the eldest son's obligation. But I'll admit I am certainly unworthy of the role... then you can succeed the house if you wish."

"Don't screw around! That territory isn't worthy of me! There is a title and honor more appropriate for me... I could've even become king!"

Hearing those words, Rudel let out a sigh. Even if he caught the second princess' fancy and managed to marry her, he wouldn't be a king. The archdukes houses originated from royal blood... if anything happened, perhaps they could take the seat of king. But even so... Rudel didn't think Chlust was of royal caliber.

"Chlust... why don't you stop dreaming and look at reality? Under normal circumstance, you could have father grant you some land, or be married to govern another house. Polishing yourself will always aid your future..."

Rudel's words were the same ones Chlust wanted to tell him for years. Despising his brother, Chlust was convinced his present situation arose from unfair evaluations of him stemming from his Rudel's shortcomings.

"This coming from you... from the bastard who aims to be the dragoon he'll never become!!? That's enough... get him!"

The followers came towards them by Chlust's orders... in that moment, Rudel came to a conclusion. Talking was pointless, and he couldn't cause a problem here and now... then he would have to run...

"R-Rudel, what are you...!"

As Izumi took a stance against the droves of tag-alongs, Rudel lifted her under his arm and jumped off of the roof.

"I-is he an idiot!?"

Hearing such voices from the followers, Rudel jumped down from the school building and landed... he instantly raced off. Get away and you win! Thought Rudel as he raced off at full speed, leaving Chlust in a daze. And one of the boys...

"H-he ran away. He really was a failure after all, Chlust-sama."

To the follower who said that with a cramped smile, Chlust also made a mocking remark at Rudel's flight.

"That incompetent... don't think you can run away forever."

But Rudel hadn't merely run away. He had reported a problem on campus to the teachers, as was his student obligation. Though in the case a commoner was being bullied by nobles, doing so would never have much of an effect...



The next day the boys, Chlust included, were put on house arrest... carrying weapons on academy grounds was prohibited in general, and more than anything, if they were trying to raise a violent incident, it was a large problem. What's more, their attack was against the future archduke Rudel... the academy could punish without hesitation.

As it was an internal problem of the Arses House, the punishment was lightened. But with it, the Arses House's reputation fell even further. Both brothers were treated as problem children.

"Chlust sure did something stupid."

Rudel spoke as he looked at the house arrest document posted up. A number of students looking at it alongside him,

(Like you're one to talk!)

They thought to themselves.

"Was that really alright? He's your younger brother, right... and while it's a problem within your house, your standing will..."

Izumi had heard Rudel was hated by his parents and the mansion's servants. So she was worried this event would needlessly lower Rudel's standing even further.

"It's fine, with this... I can only hope Chlust cools his head. And to me, my social standing is of little importance."

"... If your reputation is too low, won't it become a problem when becoming a dragoon? How should I put it... they could judge you a problematic individual, or your house could get in your way..."

On Izumi's words, Rudel made a face as if to say it had only just occurred to him. Sure enough, there would be people to oppose a problem child becoming a dragoon. From his household situation, it was thinkable they would interfere to get back at him. Because Chlust was loved by his parents...

"This is terrible!"

"Yeah, that's right... I'm glad you noticed."



As a second year student, Rudel and the others began the harsh training of the fundamental curriculum. In the first year, they would learn all the basics, and this time they would put them to practice. The academy was a place to produce the Courtois Kingdom's officers and officials. The young nobles would be taught the common knowledge of the kingdom, so if ever an emergency came, they would be able to coordinate their private armies. Or at least that was the goal.

For the commoners, they would become soldiers, or the higher-ranking knights... they could also become civil officials with their sights on promotion. The fact that people of low status could attend was linked directly to the Courtois' Kingdom's forced enlistment of them when the time arose. An academy with a military side... that was a pretense.

The place held quite a heavy setting, but to the protagonist of this story, Aleist, it was simply an ‘RPG themed around romance’. Surrounded by beauties and cuties, the protagonist would live a pampered life as he saved the country from crisis... that was the original form of this world.

The reason anyone could attend from princess to commoner was merely so the developers could include a wide range of characters.

As he recalled that, Aleist thought over the present situation. In his room, he looked over the notes he had written as he crossed off Izumi’s name. It was a game with a large cast. It didn’t matter if one or two of them were exceptions... so Aleist thought.

“The problem is Rudel. He didn’t lay hands on Fina, and the one who raised a problem was the younger brother Chlust. I need to somehow make that cool-headed Fina go dere... but if the event never happens, there’s nothing I can do...”

Even in the academy, it was hard to do anything to the princess Fina. She had guards among her classmates, and the teachers kept an eye out for her. It was a difficult situation for any man to approach... the only exceptions were the young nobles of high social standing. But Aleist’s Hardie House was an upstart house with shallow history.

He couldn’t approach. And at the same time, Aleist didn’t understand Fina’s inner thoughts. She was expressionless, but there was some madness going on underneath.

“At this rate, even when it’s the second year, I won’t be able to get a single comrade... the war begins right after graduation, so it’ll be bad if I can’t strengthen our members while I can!”

Aleist thought to himself. The war he spoke of was one with a country rivaling Courtois... the Gaia Empire would launch an invasion. They weren’t given much backstory. Or rather, there was no setting given besides the fact they were the game’s final enemy.

In the third year at the academy, there were only a few foreshadows, and a romance event with a Gaia soldier prepared for the protagonist.

But the Gaia Empire did exist, and it shared a border with Courtois.

"Millia's big sister, while she's got nice looks... as I recall, she's a dragoon, so she's not very useful. Her looks alone get a passing grade, though... there's an event with her this year, so should I try getting her?"

By Aleist's standards, 'Dragoons were unusable'... there was a reason behind it. Once dismounted from their dragons, and looked on as knights, Dragoons were units who specialized in mid, and long ranged magic battles. By Aleist's image, they were weak against enemies who specialized in close-range combat.

Sure enough, in game, they occupied a dubious niche. The dragoons boasted relatively high status... but they were a class that came with a decisive flaw of having no close-range skills.

"Cattleya will become Rudel's fiancé, so it'll be quite a while before we meet..."

Cattleya Ninias... after Rudel was chased out of the academy, it was decided she would marry into the Arses House. The engagement was decided the moment Rudel caused a scandal and returned home. The Arses House applied pressure on the Ninias House in an attempt to obtain Cattleya, a dragoon highly trusted by the royal line.

But Rudel didn't cause any problems, and he wasn't being chased from the academy. Even so, the events would happen.

Chapter 16: The Boy and Engagement

During the break before the second term, Rudel returned home. There, an event awaited him. To be more precise, it was a happening related to Aleist's event. After Chlust received disciplinary action, the Arses House grew mindful of its standings, and decided an engagement for Rudel.

That partner would be a competent individual with the trust of the crown. Originally, they would search out a match suitable for the house's social status, but the Arses House was a declining lineage, and that wish fell on deaf ears. With various circumstances involved, the chosen candidates were two dragoons, Cattleya Ninias and Lilim. Cattleya hailed from a low-ranking noble house, but she was praised as a genius dragoon, and trusted by royalty.

Lilim was an elf. But from her aptitude in magic and her longevity, she was an outstanding talent the dragoons had their expectations on. She was chosen, for argument's sake, but no one ever thought Lilim would be chosen. In short, she was there to provide the illusion of choice. This was a form of harassment against Rudel.

The Arses House discriminated against demi-humans. And yet the only marriage candidate they could get was an elf... it was surely a disgrace. What's more, the other party was a dragoon... it was impossible to simply laugh off her lineage, or so some shallow thoughts were weaved in.

And it's true it had invited in some snickers...

Oblivious of all that, Rudel returned to his home. Once he got back, he handed his sister Lena some souvenirs, and told her all about the academy... Lena was acting strange. And once he noticed, he asked...

"My engagement!? ... no, it's nothing strange, but this came straight out of nowhere."

"You're still just deciding between marriage candidates! I heard they were two female dragoon knights."

On those words, Rudel was deeply moved! Enough to make him hop up and

down...

"Is that true, Lena!? So they're dragoons... then I'll have to hurry and prepare!"

"Bro... you look happy."

"Of course I am! I may be able to meet dragons! Dragons, Lena!"

"... You haven't changed a bit."



The day of the meeting, the two rode their dragons towards the lands of Arses. The towns spreading out beneath their eyes, even from the skies, they could see the lack of vigor. Human traffic was abysmally low... to the Dragons who knew of other lands, the Arses rule was abnormal.

"Marrying into this territory would be the worst."

Cattleya muttered as she rode her Red Dragon... aboard the Wind Dragon flying beside her, Lilim answered her mutterings.

"Your engagement is a done deal, but I think you're being hasty, Cattleya."

"Hmm, you sure have it nice, senpai... there's no way in hell you'll ever be picked!"

Cattleya was no good at dealing with Lilim. She had a bad affinity with her fighting style, and she was her senior... what's more, she was a competent one chosen by a Wind Dragon, so Cattleya couldn't even complain.

Lilim was of blond hair and pale skin... but her eyes remained closed. It wasn't as if she was blind... she had a reason she couldn't open them.

"I heard from my little sister, but apparently he isn't a terrible person, you know? The vice-captain said he had considerable skill, so I can't understand why you hate him... is his face not to your tastes?"

"... His face is normal... but him alone, I'd like to avoid! That kid is..."

Cattleya's face darkened... inferring it from the atmosphere, Lilim said no more on the matter.

That dubious journey through the sky came to a close, and the two of them

landed their dragons on the Arses House courtyard... but there, a single individual leapt out. For someone to jump out unafraid of the dragons... they had nothing but bad feelings about this.

But that individual... embraced the dragon. In opposition, the Wind Dragon moved its wings to resist. As there was a danger he would be killed at this rate, Lilim warily approached that individual.

"What are you doing?"

"... I'm sorry. I was just so happy... I'm reflecting on my actions."

That individual was Rudel after all. Opening her eyes a little, Lilim confirmed the clothes he wore, and compared his appearance to her sister's description. She dropped her caution and soothed the dragon.

Seeing a dragon up close, their large bodies and demonic forms invoked much fear. For there to be an oddball who wasn't even a dragoon to leap at one... such was Lilim's first impression of him.



Led inside the mansion, the ladies found themselves in the room the meeting was supposed to take place. While their first meeting was planned to be in that room to begin with... as Rudel had done such a courtesy, the two of them were currently sipping tea on standby.

"He's a strange one, right senpai? I'm here on my house's orders, but why didn't you decline?"

Cattleya asked as she sipped her tea, and Lilim answered.

"I am an elf, and no matter how much I achieve, I will never be granted a family name. The only exception is marrying into a noble house, where the child born of the union will take up its name... this is partly the request of the elven elders, but... I heard he was an individual my little sister was interested in, so I wanted to check him out. Well, it seems I'm just here to harass the house head."

Even now, Courtois treated demi-humans poorly. The reason they could even become knights of the country was due to the fact that the Gaia Empire next

door was a military state. If they didn't prioritize ability, then a gap would open in no time.

That was the 'Setting of the World'.

As if to interrupt their conversation, the head-Rudel's father-made his entrance.

"I apologize for that previous courtesy... from that bumbling son of mine. I hope you'll forgive him."

While his words did form an apology, his attitude was clearly looking down on the two. The two paid it little mind, as they stood and offered the archduke some knightly bows. As that was happening, it was Rudel's turn to appear.

"I-I've kept you waiting!"

"Rudel! What were you thinking!? You disgrace of the Arses House... keep our guests company at once."

As he said that, Rudel's father left the room. That was usually an unfeasible interaction, but from the Arses House's point of view, they were dealing with a small-time noble, and a demi-human. If they weren't dragoons respected by the country, Rudel's father wouldn't have seen them as any more than pebbles on the side of the road.

"It is a pleasure to be of your acquaintance, Rudel-sama. For this auspicious honor, I do... hah."

While Cattleya tried to give a greeting, she stopped partway, gave a sigh, and sat down in her chair. She didn't even try to look Rudel in the face. To be more precise, she remembered her malice whenever she did.

"Cattleya... my apologies, Rudel-sama. I'm sure your dissatisfied with me, but shall we talk a while? I am Lilim... as you can see, I am an elf."

Rudel grew down over Cattleya's attitude... it felt similar to being hated by his favorite idol. But once Lilim gave her greetings, he instantly perked up.

"I am Rudel Arses. It is an honor to meet the dragoon I admire most!"

Rudel knew almost all of the dragoon knights. Irrelevant to popularity. And among them, he naturally knew the prominent name of Lilim. As Rudel

approached with sparking eyes, Lilim took a step back.

“You’re just as my sister said... do you really admire dragoons so?”

“Yes! I’ll definitely become one!”

... Lilim thought it would be difficult. Even for herself, she knew that her becoming of a dragoon was a miracle. She didn’t think it possible for Rudel who only received reasonable evaluations.

But perhaps that was why... she invited Rudel outside to ride on the back of her own dragon.



“A-amazing! Amaazing!!”

Lilim rode with him. I’m glad he’s so delighted by my prided Wind Dragon’s speed... she thought. The air resistance was blocked out with the dragon’s magic. Because of that, no matter how fast they moved across the sky, they could freely look over the ground.

“Are you satisfied, Rudel-sama? Have your worries been blown away...”

“Eh?”

There was another reason this engagement was arranged. It was to make Rudel aware he was the next archduke. To tell him to stop dreaming of dragoons forever.

“You’ll likely be marrying Cattleya, and you need to better look at reality. If you marry, then as the heir, it will become important for you to help out the current archduke.”

“W-what are you talking about? Lilim-sama, I...!”

“I heard about you from my sister. Excellent grades, and while you may have a problem or two, you’re tolerant towards demi-humans... you should be putting your territory first, and acting upon it. Give up on becoming a dragoon. Your wife Cattleya will do your share of knightly duties as well.”

The words he received from his respected dragoon were ‘give up’... those words felt extremely heavy to Rudel.



Once the meeting with Rudel was over, the two ladies set out for their lodging house. The day grew dark, and by the time they reached, it would likely be night, thought Cattleya as she teased Lilim.

“Did you successfully promote yourself, senpai? Even so, you sure are cruel... telling him to give up.”

“Oh shut it... that was originally supposed to be your job.”

“Well, well... but he’ll probably give up with this. I mean, he heard it from an active dragoon... and that look on his face when he got back! It was seriously an end-of-the-world face!”

Lilim found it a little strange... normally, Cattleya wasn’t the sort of person to say these sort of things. She was a genius, and while she looked down on her surroundings, it was never this terrible. She even grew curious as to what could drive her towards such negative feelings.

“... I felt a little sorry for him...”

Lilim’s words didn’t reach Cattleya.

Chapter 17: The Boy and the Rechallenge

The long break over, Rudel returned to the academy with heavy heart. The only thing occupying his mind was the active dragoon's words to give up... Rudel only grew darker. Not in the boys' dorm cafeteria, but the school building cafeteria that remained open during the break, Rudel sat and thought.

The ones worrying over him were Izumi and Basyle. Izumi was purely worried... Basyle heard the talks of engagement and wondered if she should just go get the mistress position to take a load off her future. She was full of impure motives...

But Rudel...

"Aah, do you think Cattleya-sama and Lilim-sama hate me?"

The point of his worries was a little off. Right, Rudel... from Cattleya and Lilim's attitude and tone,

'Don't get near me!'

He was sure they were trying to say. From Rudel's point of view, it was as if every member of his favorite idol group had come to hate him...

"After I become a dragoon, how am I supposed to look them in the eye? What am I supposed to say to them!?"

The two of them looked over Rudel with worry...



Regardless of his worries, the second term started as a matter of course...

"We will now hold the countermeasure meeting for this time's excursion!"

A countermeasure meeting towards the goal set up last year of getting first place was energetically opened. Headed by Rudel in the classroom after school.

"Just as with last time, all groups share the same starting point, but the course differs by class. And the first years of the fundamental curriculum are taking part as well... this time, there are many talents among the first years! On top of that, the princess' class contains guards who have trained from a young

age to protect her! I have no choice but to say first place will be difficult under these circumstances.”

In the documents handed out to everyone, Rudel noted the comprehensive evaluation he had Basyle collect of each class. On top of that, the necessary tools for the forest, the unneeded goods... it was all written in great detail.

“And what we need to be wary of this time is Aleist’s class. Despite being first years, they managed to eat into the top ranks last time... with that in mind, the average distance we have to traverse per day is...”

As the explanations ran on, everyone listened in all seriousness. They all wanted to clear the humiliation they suffered the year before... it united them. In that regard, Rudel gave thanks to Aleist’s classes provocations. Having an opponent to beat made for a splendid goal.

Lowering their loads, gathering the tools they never assembled last year, and confirming over the course with everyone... Rudel’s class steadily got its preparations in order.



Aleist’s class had reached the goal with a high ranking last time, so they were filled with optimism. And if there weren’t any upperclassmen, they even thought it natural they reach first place.

As Luecke Halbades and Eunius Diade’s classes were solidified with nobles, they were at a disadvantage... Rudel’s class withdrew last year, and they were out of the question! But Aleist’s class could utilize Aleist’s inexhaustible magic to conquer the forest without issue.

The result was clear before it even began.

“Hey, Aleist... looks like this’ll be another easy victory!”

One of his classmates said it as he pat Aleist on the shoulder. He wanted to use something to strengthen his bond with Aleist, but Aleist himself saw him as no more than an acquaintance.

“Yeah, that’s right. If there’s anyone we have to worry about, it would be the princess’ class, perhaps?”

"Why's that? The princess' class is also mainly nobles, so doesn't that put them at a disadvantage?"

"... The princess has guards posted among her classmates. What's more, they're incredibly skilled... do you think those folks would let the princess receive a rank that would embarrass her?"

After thinking a while, the classmate spoke simply,

"You think they'll move some hands in the background?"

Aleist sighed... if they did that, then some would grow discomfort towards the princess, so it probably wasn't going down... but that wasn't completely wrong. The academy definitely couldn't anger royalty, and in this event, the princess' safety was the first priority. Even if it was a little unfair, they'd secure her safety, if nothing else.

"Even if they don't do that, they'll get into the top ranks."

Aleist ended the conversation... but these days, Aleist had grown especially panicked. The events not going as he wanted was one thing, but Rudel was way too proficient to an abnormal level.

He thought it was because he had grown far stronger than the original protagonist, and it was creating an influence within Rudel. But that wouldn't explain his personality. The younger brother Chlust was supposed to be decent, but he received disciplinary action in his first term.

Originally, Rudel was scheduled to cause a problem...

Within his head, the fact the story wasn't moving in its set direction was making him anxious. Right around now, he was supposed to be busy with all the romance events! ... he thought.

Millia and Izumi and Princess Fina... Aleist thought over numerous characters...



It was the forest the academy used in last year's event... there, a few dozen specialists were conducting an investigation. Last year, an archduke's son faced an attack from an impossible monster.

The princess was to take part this time, so an investigation was conducted to give the final say. To conclude, there were no problems at all... the specialists didn't see anything wrong with their examination results.

"Even so... did that monster in the reports really exist? I get the feeling the monsters are a little restless, but... I can't really make heads or tails of it."

As one of the specialists pondered over it, a bad-mouthing specialist spoke.

"Perhaps it's the excuse of an archduke's idiot son... it's a right bother. There are plenty of guards who'll get their stories straight if you sent a bit of money around. The fact the monsters are restless is because a certain idiot noble made a mess of the forest!"

As they spoke, the investigation team left the forest. On the report, they wrote, 'No Issue,' even sarcastically noting the important points to remember in a forest.

But...

"GYAAAAARH!!!"

With black body and a white crest, a large bird descended onto the forest. Its form was abnormal... it boasted a number of eyes, four wings and four feet... at this point, it couldn't even be called a bird. But if it flew, its silhouette was fowl enough. So seeing it from a distance, the specialists didn't think anything particularly strange of it.

In its beak, perhaps captured in the forest... it held a large, deer-like monster. That black, grotesque monster flung it straight up, and the deer danced through the air.

... And as it fell, the monster swallowed it whole. While it didn't bite it within its mouth, some part of its body had to be chewing, as a crunching sound resounded through the woods.



Before their second attempt, their preparations all complete, Rudel and his classmates did a final check on the academy grounds. Bags, medicine, and weapons... they felt a slight difference in zeal from those around, but even so

the class thought of nothing but fulfilling this time's objective.

"I hope this year ends without issue."

On Izumi's question, Rudel left a moment of silence before answering.

"... Right."

Perplexed over that vague answer, Izumi followed Rudel's eyes. On the meeting grounds, the classes of nobles sluggishly coming in... and there, she could see Aleist's class. But their attire was the same as last year, some may say their equipment had even declined.

Rudel felt just a little anger at the fact Aleist wasn't taking this seriously. But his class... he turned his attention off the fact he wasn't even being taken into consideration. For now, he just had to focus on his goal...

Izumi... and another watched Rudel suddenly turned serious. The one sending an expressionless look of admiration was the second princess Fina.

(Master looks kinda cool!! You think he'll capture some fluffies in the forest... those killer rabbits are simply the cutest!!! Those guards never read the mood, and kill them in an instant! ... Hah, I need to replenish my cuddle meter.)

As the princess looked around, she spotted Mii's commoner class. Seeing Mii reservedly wave her hand, the princess...

(My little kitten!!! Hah, hah... you're cute as ever today... once we get back to the academy, I won't let you get away!)

Expressionlessly waved back.

Chapter 18: The Boy and Fleeing

Once the forest excursion commenced, Rudel's group hurriedly made for the first point. In the class that advanced through the trees towards its determined destination point, there were barely even any murmurs. Izumi was at the head, and Rudel walked a little behind. Izumi and Rudel were about the only ones in class able to respond to emergency situations.

Taking that into consideration, Izumi was put at the lead, and Rudel was behind giving orders to the whole.

This was largely due to Izumi's ineptitude in magic. It's not that she couldn't use it, but she would always end up relying on her specialty swordplay. In that regard, Rudel had no weaknesses. He excelled in swordplay and magic, and he was the all-purpose type that could work wherever he was stationed.

"The noble classes are lagging after all... at this rate, the commoner classes will come out on top..."

Rudel remained wary of his surroundings as he confirmed the classes slowly drifting down different routes. But there was more than one noble class, and one of them was proceeding at roughly the same speed as Rudel's.

"The princess' class is a proficient one."

As she walked at the front, Izumi could also confirm the princess class separating away. She could also see Chlust following along behind. Leaving his baggage to his followers, he was equipped with nothing but his weapon. What's more, he took a dubious distance from the class.

"Is Chlust a core fighter? If they're leaving the rear to him, he must be considerably skilled."

Rudel showed some admiration for his little brother. But his eyes soon turned to survey his own class as a whole... it seems he had already lost interest. From Izumi's point of view, Chlust who merely followed along looked like the baggage of the class.

In actuality, Chlust took a set distance from the class, and separate

combatants to protect the rear had been prepared.

“Rudel really is irresponsible in things he has no interest in. I guess that’s just like him, but...”

Izumi let out a sigh. She turned her gaze forward, proceeding further and further into the forest’s depths.



With their experience the year before, Aleist’s class was... unable to proceed forwards. It was because the academy had reflected on last years events, and added onto the important points to follow.

‘Do not recklessly destroy the forest.’

This was an entry that came from Aleist’s conduct in the previous excursion. Aleist had only ever heard of that warning in the final checks before they departed... there were printouts distributed beforehand, but he had neglected them.

“What are we going to do, Aleist!? At this rate, we’re going to come in last!”
“Just use your magic already!”

“Fool! The guards are keeping an eye on us... do you want to be found out and failed?”

Leading this panicked class, Aleist used elementary magic to take on monsters and trees... it was an exceedingly distressful journey. His classmates would immediately move out on their own, and there were even some who would hide if battle began, so finding them was yet another trial...

This situation was the same as, if not worse than what Rudel faced the year before.

“Get a grip on yourselves! Leaving everything to me... have any of you taken part in battle yet? You haven’t! Quit leaving all the combat to me!!”

In such a situation, Aleist was reaching the end of his patience. Aleist’s class started arguing on the spot... The fact their feet stopped contributed heavily to their lowering rank.



"Princess, are you alright?"

Three days since the academy's fundamental curriculum students entered the woods. It was around the time the faster classes would start reaching the goal. And the princess' class was one of those fast classes.

"Yes, I'm alright."

(Alright? No way in hell I'm alright!! Just how many fluffies do you lot think you've killed in these past three days!!? Even getting so hyped up just because you were in front of me... when you don't even usually talk to me! And there's that Chlust! That bastard... cutting down any killer rabbits that came close to me! I could've endured a few good blows! Endured and bathed in the fluff!!!)

"Princess, you haven't forgotten my achievements, have you? I, Chlust, who raced to her majesty in her time of crisis shall continue to protect you henceforth."

As Chlust defeated a killer rabbit that appeared while the guards were away, he had managed to convince the guards that complained whenever he got close to the princess. And like that, he got to be stationed nearby her. Though the one who created that gap in the guard schedule was the princess herself...

"Thank you, Chlust... you have grown reliable."

(Hah? You were just stalking me, weren't you? Rather... erk, I feel sick!)

Fina expressionlessly answered Chlust... but at that moment, a black and white wicked bird swopped down with its sights on the princess' class.



As Rudel's class made for the goal, while they showed some exhaustion, everyone wrung out the last of their strength to reach. The way things were going, they were sure to obtain a high rank. Even first place was possible... but.

"H-help us!!!"

"Someone!!!"

Appearing from the side of their route, a group of underclassmen nobles. The fact these nobles were right before the goal on the third day... meant they were probably the princess' classmates. But if any classmate went missing, or strayed from the route, the class was supposed to receive a failing grade.

"Why are you guys here? The goals should have been prepared separate for each class."

Izumi drew close and questioned the underclassmen.

"T-the princess! The princess, by a black bird!"

"A large bird monster appeared... all the guards went out to fight it, but we could only run..."

Hearing those words, Rudel's eyes turned serious.

"What direction... what direction are they in!?"

"T-that way!"

The underclassmen were startled by Rudel's shout. With shaking fingers they pointed down the path they came...

"... Everyone, listen up."

Rudel gathered all his classmates in one place and began talking.



"GYAGYAGYAAah!!!"

Black, with a white pattern across it, the fearsome bird blew away the guards who appeared to protect the princess. Flapping its wings, its four legs kicked the guards about... the scattering guards were capable ones prepared specifically for the princess. But they...

"This monster! For a while now, my body isn't doing what I tell it to!"

"What are you doing!? Someone, anyone, just take the princess and run!!!"

"If only my body could move... this damn bird...!"

Protected by her guards that were also her classmates, Fina looked upon the scene.

(Ah, even I don't think I could cuddle with that black bird.)

She was trying to escape from reality. This was largely because her body wouldn't move. She couldn't put power into her legs... her arms didn't feel like they were her own... at this very moment, the students who weren't able to flee were resolved for death.

The red eyes all across the black bird's body simultaneously turned to take in the princess. That number of eyes was abnormal, and seeing them, even the fluff-loving princess shook from the bottom of her heart. There, a white shadow leapt out.

The one who entered the gap between princess and bird was the White Cat Tribe's Mii.

"W-what are you doing, Mii! Stand down!"

The princess panicked, but even now, she had no expression. To that princess, Mii...

"I-I'm scared, but I'll do my best! I'll do my best for the princess who called me her friend! .. H-huh? I can't put power into my body?"

While Mii had jumped in with good momentum, she fell to her knees before the brutal bird's cry... as the bird approached, everyone could foresee the death of the white cat girl and the princess.

Yet once more, an individual leapt into the space between Mii and the bird. But this time, that individual was going full force from the start.

"Fly awaaay!!!"

A wind attribute magic, just as he leapt out of the forest, he smashed it into the monster at point-blank range. It was a surefire magic... If he was going to become a dragoon, Rudel said he wanted a special attack, and had Basil teach him.

With two shots of wind magic from his two hands, he displayed destructive power unthinkable from an intermediate magic. As the bird was sent flying, everyone present was left in a daze.

"M-master!"

(Master really is a badass~!!!)

"T-the noble from back then?"

Within all that, Fina and Mii were the first to let out words, but...

"... Now! Start running!"

"Eh?"

“Nya!”

Alongside his words, Rudel’s classmates ran over to the collapsed students and guards, lifting them up and running off. Rudel lifted up the princess and Mii, taking flight at full force.

“Why are you running? Didn’t you defeat it with that?”

The Princess asked.

“It’s still moving, and its eyes aren’t dead. It’ll be up chasing us soon!”

“If you use that magic from before...”

A princess under one arm, a cat girl under the other... to Mii’s question, Rudel made a straight face.

“That was a special move! I thought it up with Basyle, it was a powerful special with a mana consumption unfeasible for real combat!”

“I-it was?”

“I’m out of mana, so I can’t use it. Even if I do, I won’t be able to move anymore, so we’ll lose!”

(Master... we’re screwed!!!)

Chapter 19: The Boy and the Bird

From the moment the fundamental-curriculum students entered the forest, it was already almost the fourth day. A few hours since they ran from their foe... in the forest, they stifled their breath, Rudel's class looked after the underclassmen and guards they'd saved as they remained wary of their surroundings.

Within that, Rudel confirmed his own equipment as he looked up at the sky... his form gave Izumi a bad premonition. That wasn't the usual Rudel... it seemed almost like he was excited... almost as if he was longing for battle.

Around, Rudel's class's guards looked after the immobilized guards and students, but... unable to find the cause, they were unable to snap them out of it.

"There's no poison, and it isn't hypnosis... just what did it do to get them in this state?"

Even the most capable of guards cocked their heads as they looked over the ones unable to move freely. Within all that, the leader of the immobilized guards issued orders. But upon hearing them, the others felt some unease.

"We're fine, so just take the able-bodied ones, and get the princess out of this forest... staying here is way too dangerous."

(Was that guy always someone who spoke so heatedly? I'd prefer he didn't make a racket, riling up everyone around...)

That's what everyone wanted... but while the brutal bird was circling the skies searching them out, whether they could escape or not was the problem. And as long as they didn't have any information on the bird, the situation could take a turn for the worst.

When the princess was attacked, to the outside of the forest... they had sent a report to the academy's relevant parties. But they hadn't informed them of the bird's abilities! In such a state, the mummy hunter would become the mummy... the casualties would only increase. And in this forest populated by so many

students... you could say any and everything was bad as could be.

"That white cat missy's class was saved, but... it's only a matter of times before casualties stack up."

Mii's class was hiding alongside them. Among them, the elf girl... Millia was there as well.

"This is the worst."

The mobile guards tried to draft the optimum plan in this forest. Even if the princess was saved as a result, they would be blamed for this mess, and there was a danger they would lose their lives... So the line came out as they thought over their prospects.



"Use a decoy? ... And will that save us?"

One of the guards spoke to Rudel as a representative. He explained that Rudel and the princess would take along some of the still-mobile guards and make a break for it.

"... It will definitely save you."

The guard's face was dark, or rather tense. He was hiding something, convinced of that, Rudel asked the guard.

"Will that save all of us?"

On those words, the eyes of all those lowering their breath gathered. The guards hung their heads, and from their attitudes, the students knew not everyone would be saved. There were even some who began to sob.

"We'll take those swift of feet outside of the forest. We need to get the information out quickly. It's already midnight, so the probability of being found by the enemy is low."

The guard felt ashamed that he could say nothing but lies. If the enemy was one with night-seeing eyes, they would definitely be spotted, and moving through the night was exceedingly difficult... the fact they needed to hurry regardless of such factors was because Fina was the princess of this country.

“Please pay me no mind... let us search for a path where we all survive.”
(You’re telling me to abandon my kitten!? Not happening! Not in a million years! And if I abandoned my classmates, what sort of person would that make me? I’m royalty so there’s no helping it? ... Like any of you actually care about that! In the end, you’re just scared of what punishment is in store.)

“Got it... then I’ll be the decoy.”

“What!?”

As the guard showed surprise, Izumi and Fina reacted as well. At the unusual air Rudel gave off, Izumi’s unease became definite.

“Rudel, what are you talking about!?”

(Oh, right... I heard master was an idiot. He can study, but he’s not the clever type... though his technique in petting fluffies is at genius level...)

Within that dark air, Rudel’s outrageous statement had completely changed the flow.

“Did you hear any of that!? And as an escort target, you hold a high level of priority! Use such an individual as a decoy? I’d like you to quit joking around! Let us choose a decoy from among the guards... while I do feel sorry for the other students, they’ll have to escape by their own...”

Right, this plan utilized the other students running around to save the princess alone by all means. Even if the guards were done in, as long as the students’ escape attempts drew the monster’s attention, that was enough... it was that sort of plan.

And at that moment, two new classes arrived, led by their guards. Students the guards had to protect no matter the cost... the classes of Luecke and Eunius of the Three Lords.

The noble students, unable to understand the situation, raised their voices to cry out, ‘Explain what’s going on!’ Everyone present suppressed the mouths of those students, explaining to them in a whisper... but still they couldn’t understand. Or rather, they wouldn’t believe.

In this forest used for school events, there’s no way such dangerous monsters

could exist... that was their argument.

"Quiet! Make a ruckus, and the enemy'll find us... the princess is here too, so please just follow orders."

The guard leader frantically explained in a small voice, even bringing the princess into it. If that was the case, the nobles could only keep quiet... in such a situation, Luecke and Eunius,

"If there's such a monster out here, it's much too dangerous... that's a problem at a level where you'll need to request a knight brigade."

In contrast to Luecke's levelheadedness, Eunius' reaction was belligerent.

"What good's it do to be weak at the knees? This is a chance to raise our names... and if we're protecting the princess, won't this be a bit of a hero's tale?"

He muttered as he gripped the hilt of the sword on his back... there, Rudel put in his mouth.

"Then the three of us can be the decoy. As luck would have it, I have no objection to their strength. Eunius will be the vanguard, and Luecke at the rear...? I think I'm fine wherever, but..."

"Wait a second, Arses! Why are you dragging me into this decoy role!?"

While his voice was a whisper, Leucke's voice gradually grew with anger. Rudel responded only as if it were natural.

"It's only natural for a noble to protect the crown. When you're always going on about obligation and responsibility, you're going to run?"

"... When we have specialists, why do we amateurs have to move..."

In order to ensure the princess can get away, I don't want to decrease the amount of guards on her. Also...

On Rudel's high-handed persuasion, those around grew anxious. Action without any regard to his own standing was Rudel's specialty, but... this was simply too terrible.

There, yet another new class made their entrance... Aleist's class. They were

terribly worn out, and it didn't look as if anyone besides Aleist would be of any use... the lot of them seemed to be nothing more than a hindrance.

"I heard the story along the way... the chance has finally come for me to do some service!"

Aleist-the sole energetic one-looked at the princess as he gave a response brimming with confidence... but his clothes and equipment were in tatters, and Fina wasn't quite buying it.

"Are you the son of the Hardie House? I've heard rumor of you..."
(Oh, right, umm... that guy! Mister upperclassman who's strong like a monster, and looks really cool, but can't get a girlfriend for some reason... I won't say anything about someone's hobbies, but what's so good about being with other men? Normally, shouldn't you choose the fluff!?)

Fina seemed to misunderstand Aleist. But unaware of that, Aleist also had some thoughts.

(What's this!? Even the white cat Mii is here! As I recall, these two had a beautiful friendship that transcended the bounds of status, right? If I perform well here, then... alright, whatever monster you are, come at me!)

Within that space now lacking in tension, Rudel alone seriously checked over his equipment as he issued orders to his classmates. And looking up at the sky...

"Then Aleist can also join in, and the four of us will be decoys... everyone else should make for the outside of the forest. Izumi, you guide the students apart from the princess."

Even so, Izumi tried to stop Rudel.

"Give it up already! There's no need for you to do such a thing, is there!?"

As Rudel still wouldn't conceded the decoy role, the blood came to a guard's head, and he tried to draw close. It was at that moment.

"GyaGYAaaah!!!"

Alongside an ominous voice, the brutal bird descended... As everyone was frozen on the spot, with a sword equipped on his right hand, and magic gathered in his left, Rudel attacked at full speed.

Unable to respond in time, the bird was sliced into and sent flying with magic... but it quickly rose, angrily shaking its body... it had completely set its sights on Rudel.

"Go!!! ... And to you three fellow decoys, decide on your own whether you'll stay or run... if it's just me alone, I don't know whether I can defeat it or not."

"Wha!? You plan to beat it!? This monster?"

Luecke was surprised. And Aleist dumbfounded. As everyone sprung to action in response to Rudel's call, some carried those who couldn't move on their backs, while others just ran in a frenzy... but even so, the bird's many eyes focused on Rudel.

"I'm staying too."

Izumi tried to take part as a decoy, but Rudel denied it.

"That would trouble the class. With your better sense for the night, their probability of escape will increase if anything terrible happens... now go!"

"Kuh! Everyone better return alive, Rudel!"

Izumi also lent a shoulder to an immobilized student as she ran off. Worrying about Rudel to the very end. And of the remaining four, Eunius let out a grand laugh as he took a stance with his sword.

"Nice... splendid, Rudel! You're the best... I recognize your courage to challenge this beast! Luecke! Aleist! If you're running, then make it quick."

"D-don't joke around! There is no reason for me to fear a monster of this caliber! I'll blow it away with my magic, so you need only stand there and watch... Rudel, you bear witness too! That this is my power of..."

Luecke quickly began to prepare his prided magic. Regardless of his long-winded speech, combat had already begun, so it was ignored as a simple matter of course. But Aleist...

"W-why are the Three Lords getting along... shouldn't you all 'hate each other'? And yet, why are you fighting on a combined front..."

He was still muttering himself, his preparations for battle still pending.

Chapter 20: The Three Idiots and Fluffies

The four who went to serve as decoys... got wrapped up in intense combat they did not, as they ran around. To be more precise, it was a repeat of hit, run and hide. The four of them coordinated attacks as they fled.

"What's with that bird!? I don't even know if magic is working, and approaching it is dangerous... isn't there anything we can do about it?"

Luecke noticed they lacked the power to land anything decisive, but there, Aleist gave his opinion.

"Down! It's maximizing the effect of status down skills!"

Aleist unraveled the game knowledge he carried in his head. What he remembered was abnormal status magic and special skills. They weren't particularly useful in the game.

"Down? The hells that?"

But neither Eunius nor Luecke seemed to get it. The down Aleist referred to was a special ability to lower the parameters of an enemy, but it didn't scale well in-game...

"Any means to prevent it?"

Rudel understood Aleist had some sort of info on the enemy and tried asking. But...

"There's recovery items, and the probability of down taking effect isn't that high..."

"By recovery item... you mean medicine? There's a medicine that'll erase this special effect? And you somehow plan to use it while fighting?"

While Luecke thought over it, Eunius let out a sigh.

"If something like that's out there, then our best bet would be the guards... but whether we can get any or not is all up to chance. In that case, we can only settle it with one blow."

On Eunius' thoughts, Aleist held his head.

“There’s no way a boss would go down in one hit...”

Running around, those tattered four stepped forward for their final actions. Luecke with his magic... Eunius channeled magic into his large blade... Aleist used his prided magic sword, and Rudel prepared magic on both his hands.

The first to move, Luecke aimed for the moment the bird noticed them and began its descent, giving the signal.

“Now! Everyone attack!!!”

Luecke shot a large-scale magic at the bird... once the impact caused it to lose its balance and fall, this time Eunius slashed with his sword, and Rudel launched his assault. Eunius’ blade cut into the bird’s wings, and Rudel’s special move sent it flying a distance... and one person was left.

“D-did that do it in...!?”

The words Leucke spoke out of breath were soon answered, blood flowing all over its body, the brutal bird stood to its feet. Eunius renewed his stance, but Rudel wasn’t even able to stand. An overuse of mana... the backlash put a burden on his body. And making that even worse was the bird’s ability.

“Tsk! I never would’ve imaginied it would be this hard to move... Leucke... can you stand?”

“Don’t make light of me, Eunius! It’s not that I can’t stand! I just don’t want to...”

On Eunius’ words, Leucke showed some backbone. As the three of them were assailed by the bird’s ability, Aleist alone was safe. But the man in question hesitated to cut at the beast’s sinister form.

“What are you doing, Hardie!? Get in an attack! You can still make it!”

Aleist moved at Eunius’s words, but at that moment... fire rained down from the sky, reducing the bird to cinders... that spectacle was almost as if it was roasted on a pillar of flames.

Once the fire died down, and the forest went quiet... it was right at that time the sun began to rise, and the area grew brighter. Descending, bathed in its light, was Cattleya on her Red Dragon.

Cattleya got down from her dragon and looked around. On her form, tattered as he was, Rudel couldn't help but feel excited. But after taking in the situation, the conclusion Cattleya came to on her own...

"It looks like one of you persisted to the end. As expected of Hardie-kun, I guess? On the other hand... Rudel, you're all beaten up, and you can't even stand. You really are unsightly."

As Cattleya stood before the four, with Aleist being the only one left standing, and taking her own feelings into account, she couldn't think that Rudel had persisted. No, she didn't want to think it. Even when, from his strength, she was easily able to imagine him contributing to the battle...

The standing Cattleya looked down over the collapsed Rudel. On her words, Rudel felt ashamed that he hadn't changed at all from the year before. He had trained... he had learned... but even so, Rudel ended up being saved.

Within that scene, Aleist...

"Eh? ... What's with this situation? And my meeting with Cattleya-san should come much later... huh!?"



The events in the forest became a topic of hot conversation within the academy. 'In order to save the princess, Aleist volunteered to be a decoy!' this talk made Aleist quite the popular one on campus... but the Three Lords... Rudel and the others' assessments weren't quite to par.

For Eunius and Luecke, as expected of the heirs to the Three Lords! They'd say and praise them, but for Rudel alone, it even came to a problem of responsibility. He was criticized for volunteering to be a decoy. He didn't understand his standing... It was a result of the guard reports, and Chlust who had fled before anyone realized it spreading lies to change the point of any blame put against him...

'On top of Rudel spreading fear and disorder, he wasn't of any use in battle.'

The fact he risked his life to save the princess didn't get across, and in regards to this case, Rudel was horribly blamed. The academy itself denied the rumors, but by that action, 'Is he sealing their mouths with money?' or 'They're

covering it up precisely because it's true!' the students had reached their conclusions.

In order to heal his beaten body, Rudel was admitted to the infirmary. Lying at the window-side bed that was quickly becoming his reserved space, he could naught but look at the sky. And by his side, Izumi peeling fruit was the usual sight.

"You think I'll see a dragon... you think one'll fly over..."

He had his fill of boring patient life. In the adjacent beds, Luecke and Eunis were admitted just in case. Unlike Rudel's terrible shape, they had gotten off with light injuries.

"Are you always like this?"

To Luecke's question, Izumi gave a bitter smile.

"We're fine and all, but... Rudel, you can't just be sitting back here, right?"

Right, Rudel alone was in a horrible situation.

"I'm sorry. I explained it to everyone in my class, but it seems the academy is moving towards hushing this incident up. To be more precise, everyone's trying to push blame onto one another... making it that you caused the problem, they're postponing your punishment. In the worst case... you might be expelled, no I heard they'll forcefully make you graduate."

Rudel reacted to those words. With a serious expression...

"Izumi... what do you think I should name my special attack? Doing it with just a random yell every time is harsh. You have something cool, and short enough that they won't see it coming?"

"Oy, you might be expelled here. And you're on about special moves!?"

Luecke made a face of disbelief.

"You can become a knight on just the two years of fundamental education. I'll just work my way up to dragoon from there, so... I'm not particularly interested. No, it's a pity to lose the learning environment of this school."

Rudel completely failed to answer the question. On his words, Izumi looked

down, a dark look on her face. Izumi was irritated at Chlust. Chlust and the underclassmen who ran away with him were moving to build up Rudel's sins in order to conceal their disgrace.

Using the power of their houses... but this was strange. No matter the case, it wasn't normal for them to dress Rudel up to this level, and it even seemed downright impossible. Perhaps there was some blame in Rudel's actions. But Rudel also had his reasons.

That bird's abnormal abilities made those around it belligerent, it could be said it excited them. Put under that effect, Rudel was unable to make rational decisions. That had been proven by medical professionals, and even on top of that, the academy tried to push blame onto Rudel.

Izumi gradually felt Rudel was enraptured within some larger flow... as if this was brought about by a malign twist of fate. As he walked against the stream, Rudel's intense defiance of the force almost seemed to be chipping his life away.



Around that time, Princess Fina was recuperating in her room. With the questioning and interviews she received each day on this matter, in order to heal her daily fatigue...

(Fluffy fever!!! Today's the day I pet and fondle the hell out of Mii!!!)
“Don’t run, Mii.”

... She had invited her best friend Mii to her room. With the danger she had been put through this time around, knights from her home had raced in as well. In truth, just beyond her room’s door, robust female knights stood on duty. If they made a ruckus in the room, it would be heard outside.

Even now, Courtois held a prejudice towards demi-humans. Paying mind to that, Fina had kept quiet to that point. But.

“P-princess! You don’t have to pet me that much... why are you groping my breasts!?”

Chasing Mii around on the bed, Fina pet and fondled her all over. With her expressionless face, she pursued nothing more than fluff.

"I want to pet you."

(I can't get enough of this! The taste of fluffing up this cute little kitten... my body can't live without the fluff anymore!!! I can't endure it any longer! When I don't know when I'm going to die, holding back is... ah! I have to learn master's technique!)

And such a thing would end up saving Rudel.

Chapter 21: The High Knight and the Headmaster

Izumi returned to the girls' dorm, and when night fell, Rudel slipped out of the infirmary. His hand was clasped around a sword. Noticing his movements, Luecke held some suspicious and decided to tail him. There, Eunius called out.

"Just leave him be."

"Like I could ignore someone going out with a weapon! And there's no telling what he's going to do."

Eunius rose from his bed, scratching his head as he motioned for Luecke to follow. Abiding by that, Luecke walked behind Eunius.

The two went out to the infirmary veranda. There, Eunius pointed his finger downwards... the sound of the swinging sword reached even the second floor, and Leucke could see the form of Rudel in tears as he swung it around. The pitiful form of a young boy wrapped in bandages, desperately swinging his blade.

"He's doing good with that beaten body of his... he's been doing it every day for these past few days."

"Why is he crying? He didn't give off that feel during the day. Going on about special attacks, and taking it easy reading a book on Dragon Petting or something..."

"Like I know! But, well... not just those around him, hated even by his own family, but even so he aimed to be a dragoon. And then came this incident. It's only natural for him to want to cry."

Undenounced to the two of them, Rudel was crying for a slightly different reason. From Rudel's point of view, the responsibility for this case lay with him. Leucke, Eunius... and even Aleist had been unreasonably dragged into the battle, and that was without a doubt his fault.

He knew his house would never recognize him. He was aware that the surrounding assessments of him were low. But even so, if he put in the effort, he would be recognized... he believed he could become a dragoon. And he still

believed it.

The reason Rudel wept: the simple fact that there were people who would act for his sake. Everyone in his class stood up for him. To Rudel, that was something to fill him with delight, but at the same time, after exposing his classmates to danger, he felt ashamed he wasn't even able to protect them.

Rudel wanted to become stronger, and but for now he could simply swing his sword towards that ideal.



The morning of the next day, the academy's staff were gathered, and a meeting was held. This was a large problem, and they had to make it clear who was responsible for exposing the princess to danger, but the problem here was...

"To think the Arses House would say such a thing..."
"Even if they tell us to expel Rudel-sama, no matter how you look at it, this is..."
"The palace is telling us to hurry it up. Perhaps obeying them is for the best."

The Arses House demanded Rudel be expelled, stating they would take responsibility for this incident. The rumors had spread even further in these past few days. Rudel had exposed the princess to danger... the younger brother Chlust had protected her. As those rumors were intentionally circulating, they were already beyond anyone's hands.

"So the Arses House chooses Chlust-sama over the eldest son Rudel-sama."

As the headmaster let out a sigh, the faculty made doubtful faces. The siblings were full of problems, but while Rudel earnestly set his sights forward, focusing on pursuing his dream, Chlust was a simple problem child. As he took along his followers and walked around the campus, he bought in the animosity of commoners and demihumans.

The answer the academy reached was to postpone matters until the target of responsibility disappeared... but Rudel alone would be forcefully transferred to the two-year track and made to graduate. From there, the title of knight would be granted to him, to leave him the possibility of becoming a dragoon.

Taking in the demands of the Arses House, this was the best the academy

could do to protect the boy.

“What about the investigation?”

“I heard it’s under royal jurisdiction.”

“Even so, it sure is ironic... the deserters are saved, and those who stood firm face the hammer.”

Within that dark conference room, the headmaster looked over the documents as he spoke.

“Protecting the crown is a noble’s duty, huh... for the Arses house to discard such a splendid successor.”

A teacher who felt a sense of danger at the headmaster’s words started speaking as if to cut him off.

“But it’s that! With this, Rudel-sama can pursue a dragoon’s path without any constraint!”

On those words, a number of teachers joined in, making for a brighter conversation than any the meeting had seen.

“Sure enough!”

“If he becomes a knight, he’ll obtain the qualifications to become a dragoon.”

“If he can become one, that is.”

As that conversation of empty bravado carried on, the headmaster thought over the future. Just how was he going to protect Rudel...



Her health recovered, and her fluff levels fully replenished, the Second Princes Fina looked on in horror at the document brought by the high knight who had come to her room to report.

“What is the meaning of this...”

(What’s this? It’s become that Chlust protected me from that blasted bird, and master spread panic, exposing me to danger!!? No way in hell! Rather... where was MY opinion taken into account? In the first place, what Chlust protected me from was a killer rabbit, and when that bird came out, he was nowhere to be found!)

The reporting knight had her long, purple hair in order. An older beauty with glasses who gave off a cold impression. She had a harsh personality, and Fina herself classified her as a person she was terrible at dealing with. She had no sense of flexibility.

"It is just about decided that Rudel-dono will take responsibility for this matter. The academy is leaving matters unresolved, allowing him to graduate, but I am against it. Such a man is unworthy of becoming a knight."

From there on, the high knight continued to take lines from the report to say Rudel's punishment was too light. Just because he is next in line to the title of Archduke Arses, they've done nothing but remove him! She asserted, but Fina...

(This is bad! Master has yet to pass on his technique! If he graduates here, it will be a heavy blow to my fluffy life... but why does master's house hate him so much anyways?)

Looking at the high knight who continued to offer some harsh opinion on Rudel, Fina thought.

(Should I have her investigate? While that's going on, I'll write a letter to father and mother. Meanwhile, I'll sit back with Mii and do all sorts of... I can't! If I fail here, then my national treasure of a master may be erased by the Arses House.)

In essence, Rudel would take an active knight role upon his graduation, but by the orders of his house, he would likely be stationed in a high level danger zone.

"... Sophina. This report is mistaken."

The expressionless princess panicked within as she persuaded the high knight Sophina.

"It's mistaken? But this is the official document. It couldn't be..."

(That's why you let your years slip by! Your thoughts are way too rigid in any and everything! There aren't any lies written down, but don't you think this thing's been written in a way that invites in misunderstanding? I'm no good with her! I want to go do this and that with Mii already.)

Thinking some considerably rude things, Fina spoke on.

"Rudel-sama risked his life to protect me. Protecting the crown is a noble's duty... he said as he stood against great danger. There is no way he should be judged for those actions."

"But right here, it says...!"

As Sophina's voice grew louder, Fina expressionlessly added on.

"Then make a decision with your own eyes. The whole truth is not contained in paper, and I believe I was saved by Rudel-sama."

(A look at master's technique will change your life! Putting that aside, if she investigates on her own, she'll definitely notice something's strange! Now go prove master's innocence(?)!)

"If you insist it so... but if my eyes tell me there is no mistake to be found, then I shall punish him as harshly as the palace dictates."

Seeing Sophina's enthusiasm, Fina thought yet another rude thing.

(It's because you make such scary faces that the men run away... you're already at a good age, so just get married already. Always at work, no chance to see anyone... if only you had cat ears, I would've doted on you! I'd have kept you by my side all the while! A harsh-natured cat-eared beauty... that's a yes!!!)



Oblivious to everything moving around, today once more Rudel and two others got along well across their infirmary beds. And the conversation blazed about the book Rudel was reading, 'How to Pet a Dragon'.

"Why is there an application of such high-level magic theory!? Why is there a theory that puts technical books to shame in this book about petting!?"

Detailing magic theory so complex it even surprised the magic-centric Luecke, 'How to Pet a Dragon'. Theories and formulas that had even surpassed present knowledge had been developed for no more than to stroke a dragon.

"Oy! It even ends it all by saying, 'But the most important part is love'! Isn't that strange!? Applying technique close to the essentials of martial arts towards petting, and in the end it's all love!!!"

Eunius cried out. Written there was a petting method focusing on the

applications of anatomy and the martial arts... After detailing all the finer points, it tied it all up with love. 'How to Pet a Dragon'.

"See? Isn't it amazing!? The author of this book was a former dragoon who lived a hundred years ago... if only I could've met him."

Ignoring their shock, Rudel thought about his senior separated by a gap of a hundred years.

Chapter 22: The Boy and Petting

In the vacant academy cafeteria, Millia met with her sister Lilim for the first in some time. In the cafeteria that only operated for lunch, they prepared their own tea and talked.

Lilim had to drop by the academy for the matter with the princess, so she stopped for a pleasant chat with her little sister Millia. But Millia suddenly asked about Rudel.

“Sis, what’s going to happen to Rudel?”

“... His rights to succeed will be stripped away. Other than that, the academy and palace... there’s a feud going on between them and the Arses House, so nothing’s been decided yet.”

Lilim faintly opened her eyes to confirm the darkening of her little sister’s face.

“The palace is troubled to make a decision. Problem child or honor student... the king has surprisingly high expectations for Rudel-sama. Said he’s an interesting boy.”

As they talked over such things, Lilim began thinking over Cattleya’s abnormal conduct in this case. Cattleya’s hatred of Rudel was abnormal. From the documents to the reports, they were all so stained in personal opinion they couldn’t be used in any judgement. So Lilim swapped out with her, and took over the messenger role.

As the dragoons had got themselves involved, she had to take care of further processing as well... Lilim had it hard.

And like that, the dragoon and high knight started into their investigations.



From the incident, Aleist had suddenly become the academy’s hero. The result based around the overlap of a number of ulterior motives tied in directly to Aleist’s popularity. Cattleya who used him, and Chlust who wanted to pin the crime on Rudel. But unaware of all that, Aleist enjoyed his situation.

“I love you, Aleist-senpai!”

“Please go out with me!”

“I like you! ... As a man.”

This situation Aleist had wished for differed somewhat from his plans, but minding it not, Aleist happily played with his under and upperclassmen. He stopped coming to the classes he had attended before, and his grades dropped in proportion to his popularity level.

“This is it! This is what I was waiting for!”

Taking out the notes in his room, he started reading through them. A large number of the names had been crossed out, but even so, he looked over what was to come.

“After this, I win in the final tournament of the fundamental curriculum, and I meet the first princess! Even if the developments have changed so much, at this stage, Princess Aileen shoud still be... alright! I’m feeling motivated, so I’ll start working hard tomorrow.”

Princess Aileen who’s name he spurted was Fina’s elder sister. Within the setting where despite its size, the country of Courtois had no male heirs, the value of the princesses was high. If you married one, then just as Chlust said, you’d get close to the status of king.

Within this world, the Princess Aileen held a vital position called ‘Main Heroine’. More beautiful than her little sister, blond with blue eyes, a peace-loving woman who was kind to everyone. It was said there wasn’t a man in the lands whose heart couldn’t be stolen by her smile. As she was doted on by her surroundings all her life, she had a position of a princess oblivious to the ways of the world.

Bud Aleist hadn’t and couldn’t notice. The heroine with such a perfect setting, Aileen’s kindness was limited to humans. She loved peace so much, she was raised to be a woman whose thought often went too far... though it was true that unlike her sister, she was abundant in emotions, and she had no hidden side to her...

“Wait for me, my harem! This is the beginning of my era! I can’t wait for what’s to come in the next tournament!”

Aleist who looked up to such a princess. He was human, and he didn't hold any special prejudice. So he couldn't understand the princess' abnormality.



Under her private investigations, Sophina had come to the hospital under the name of an infirmary the Three Lords' eldest sons had been admitted. An especially splendid room within had become their hospital room. Before coming there, she had taken opinions from the classes concerned, and asked around about the individual called Rudel.

To be blunt, her opinion of Rudel was the worst! He received disciplinary action after hitting on every girl he could find in his first year of the fundamental curriculum! He went against his upperclassmen (challenged them to duels)! There was no end to his infamy. But the people around him would praise him, and never spoke ill.

That point alone caught Sophina's interest, but it was true the bad rumors overwhelmingly outnumbered the good.

"There's no doubt he's no good as a person. The tournament results make his grades look dubious, and more than anything, someone aiming to be a knight would n-never... h-hit on girls like that! Never!!!"

Sophina's face reddened strangely around that part as she entered the room of the three. What she saw there...

"And I'm saying, why does such a high-level theory have no application outside of petting!? I'm sure it will be useful outside of it!"

"Hey, if you lower a sword like that, don't you think it'll cut well? It's strange these techniques aren't used anywhere outside of petting, right? Isn't it strange, Rudel!?"

She confirmed the three of them in heated debate over a book titled, 'how to Pet Dragons'. In regards to that, Rudel refuted.

"This book has existed for quite some time, and there's no way I could tell you why the theories have never found use! In the first place, even I wonder why this book doesn't get better reviews... petting dragons fills them with happiness! It's the best thing in the world!!!"

"That's not the problem! The reason it's not reviewed is because of that title! Who would realize that book's worth after reading that title? I'd lose interest even before getting to its contents!"

Luecke offered an emotional rebuttal, and just before Rudel could give an objection of his own, he noticed Sophina was there. Eunias and Luecke also turned towards the knight who entered the sick room, unpleasant looks on their faces. Once they understood she was a high knight, they reluctantly questioned her.

"For a high knight to silently sneak into our room... what's your business?"

In regards to Eunius' cynicism, Sophina spoke.

"My humblest of apologies. I already spoke to the guards outside. When I tried to receive permission to enter, you were making quite a ruckus."

Her gestures were perfect as she bowed and answered. As expected of a high knight, the thought crossed their minds.

"I wish to speak with Rudel-dono over the matter with the princess. May I have just a moment of your time?"

As Sophina asked her question, Rudel who had gotten a tad emotional was struck by inspiration. If he could get those two to see the culmination of the theories in, 'How to Pet Dragons', then they would surely understand its value!

"Before that, could I have a moment of yours? There's something I need your cooperation with!"

"W-what? Well, if it's something within my bounds, then I mind it not. Though I'll be hearing you out afterwards."

Sophina gave a vague reply to his request. She would end up regretting that for the rest of her life. Wary of Rudel as she approached, she thought that even if he assaulted her, it would only add to his crimes.

"Please let me pet you!"

"Eh?"

... Around ten minutes later, half in tears and unsteady on her feet, the form of a high knight was witnessed fleeing from the infirmary. Her face red and her

gestures strangely erotic, the female knight Sophina left the room, but the three left behind...

"How about that!? That one wasn't perfect, but now you see how amazing... where are the two of you going? H-huh? Just listen to me!"

"..."

While Luecke ignored him and left the room, Eunius...

"... Bathroom."

Gave one word before he left, and didn't come back for a while. In regards to that, Rudel spoke to himself.

"So even that was no good? Then I have to get better! I have to master it before I meet a dragon!"

He renewed his resolve.



Sophina wept as she burst into the princess' room. Her fluffy time with Mii interrupted, Fina's heart was tinted with rage... expressionless as she was.

"What happened? Did you get your hands on some information?"
(You really don't read the mood, do you! What do you think my fleeting moments of fluff are... even so, her face is red, and she's fidgeting around strangely, or how should I put it, why does she look so unsteady? Haha, if only she had cat ears and a tail in that state, it would've done it for me.)

"U-um, well... Rudel-dono was more than I had ever imagined. I'm sure the reports are mistaken... I'm going to report this to the palace, so i-if you'll pardon my leave!"

(I-I'll never forgive you... Rudel Arses!)

Seeing Sophina run from the room, Fina was certain her plan had succeeded. Oblivious to its failure, she started into her final preparations. She turned to her desk and began writing up a letter.

"What's wrong, princess? Suddenly writing a letter."

On Fina's actions, Mii who had been released from the fluffing approached.

As Mii made light steps treading across the floor, Fina thought she would die from the cuteness.

"It's nothing, Mii. It may not be necessary, but I don't want to be negligent in the end..."

Saying that, Fina patted Mii's head. Mii seemed to be enjoying it. But!

(Hah, hah... just you wait, little kitten! Once I learn master's technique, I'll make you feel satisfied!!!)

Her tensions were at a dangerous level.

Chapter 23: The Boy and a Chance

While Lilim had come to report to the academy, she was also to look into Rudel and the incident. She investigated into things outside of Cattleya's report. Whether the rumors around the boy were true... the matter was resolved surprisingly quickly.

For her little sister Millia knew a majority of it.

"I don't really know about Aleist, but he's quite strong, and everyone says he's the strongest in our year. Rudel... tries really hard, and while he sometimes spins his wheels in vain or goes off in the wrong direction, he's a good person."

In order to resolve the rumors circulating around the palace, she continued asking about the truth.

"Chlust saved the princess? Not in a million years, sis. I mean, he ran away and was nowhere to be found. More importantly, if Rudel wasn't there, we'd all have been sacrifices..."

On these contrary accounts, Lilim wondered whether the report had been falsified. The more she looked into it, the more her questions were resolved.

(So it's Cattleya after all... even if you hate him, you'd go this far!?)

But as the two of them drank their tea, down the hallway visible from the school cafeteria, a single high knight unsteadily crossed, half in tears... it was Sophina.

Lilim tried to call out to Sophina. But noticing her, Sophina raced off in the opposite direction. Finding it suspicious, Lilim looked down the path she came...

"That's the way to the infirmary, right? Why was a high knight running in tears from such a place?"

After thinking a while, she offered her sister Millia some parting words before heading off. In that infirmary that held the same facilities as a hospital, she stopped a random nurse and inquired.

"She left the room with the Three Lords' sons in tears!?"

This was a surprise. A high knight was a holder of considerable skill, the proud shield of the crown... for such a knight to leave in tears, Lilim could only imagine the worst. Even if they were children, they were three young men... as a fellow female knight, she felt some anger as she headed for the room of the Three Lords' sons.

“Pardon me!”

Silencing the guards in front of the door with her aura of anger, she forced her way in, only to find Rudel alone. He stood, a serious expression on his face as he thought over something. Seeing him like that, Lilim couldn't think any of the indecent things she imagined had occurred. Just as she thought she was imagining things...

“Ah! L-Lilim-san? W-why are you here...”

Noticing her, Rudel offered a somewhat awkward greeting. As she returned it, she felt somewhat awkward herself. There's no way she could say she barged in under her own misunderstanding. So she changed the subject.

“Don't worry about it. More importantly, is there something troubling you?”

She asked what she shouldn't have.

“T-truth be told, because of my own inadequacy, I was unable to convey the wonders of this book to my acquaintances...”

The book he held out was, of course, ‘How to Pet a Dragon’... seeing the book, Lilim gave a bitter smile. She didn't know what to say about that book whose title alone made one lose the motivation to read on. Seeing Lilim like that, Rudel,

“U-um! Just a little... could you let me pet you? This is definitely an amazing book! I want to prove it!”

As Lilim had entered the room under a misunderstanding, she thought it would be fine if she allowed that much. As a result, just like Sophina, red to the ends of her long elf ears, she ran from the infirmary half in tears. And Rudel was left alone once more.

“So it was no good after all? Do I have to practice some more?”



A few days from those happenings, the palace sent the academy an unexpected proposal. To deal with it, the teachers gathered in the meeting room early in the morning... its contents stated...

"The royal family is coming to watch the fundamental curriculum tournament!? We haven't prepared anything for them!"

"It seems they want to see the strength of Aleist and Chlust-sama who saved the princess... even so, this is too sudden."

"The king said he would personally bestow a reward to the victor."

The academy faculty had gathered to discuss yet another painstaking issue. The headmaster thought a while over its contents. It was unprecedented for the royal family to personally go to the academy right after an incident. Was there anything bothering them?

Among the possible candidates, Rudel's circumstances came to mind.

"Hmm, then the academy will be busy all the way up to the third term. Everyone must do their best to assure no negligence in this tournament's preparations... meeting adjourned."

The headmaster's reaction was surprisingly light, causing the surrounding teachers to look on with wonder. But as the royal family was coming, they had no choice but to make this tournament a success. In order to do that, they would have to start hurriedly preparing. Standing busily from their seats, the teachers left the meeting room...

Left alone in that room, the headmaster,

"Will this be his chance, or will it be another pinch... if his class does manage to win, I'm sure he'll grow closer to his desires."

When the headmaster first heard of Rudel's dream to be a dragoon, he thought it was a good thing to hold such a dream while you're still young. Even if you were frustrated when it didn't come true, as long as you were young, you could start over and grow from it... that's what he thought at first, but now was different.

"I want to grant his dreams. If his dreams-all too pure-ever collapse, he'll

crumble before he can ever stand again. More than anything, after dragging so many people in with him, it won't just end with him saying, 'I couldn't do it.'

The headmaster laughed as he looked through the documents.

Like that, the third term's fundamental curriculum class tournament became something never seen before. The king was personally coming out. By various motivations, many would use this opportunity to show off their ability. Within all of that, the headmaster couldn't wait to see how far Rudel would go.



"Did you hear, Rudel!? The royal family's coming to this year's class tournament... what's more! If you come out on top, you'll receive a reward. I talked it over with the class, and we decided to ask him not to force you to graduate!"

Racing to Rudel's room in the infirmary, Izumi had hurried to deliver the information... but, Basyle was already there, telling him just what she wanted to say.

Luecke and Eunius had already been discharged, and when Rudel was supposed to be the only one there, Basyle somehow got the drop on her.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I already told him."

"... Is that so."

Izumi was a little vexed, but once she saw Rudel's reaction, she gave a smile.

"So I have another chance... I still want to learn in this academy! I want to compete against Aleist, and there are still upperclassmen stronger than me... more than anything, if I'm with everyone in class, with everyone who moved to help me... let's win this tournament."

Rudel stood from the bed, a serious look on his face. Taking off the bandages wrapped around his body, he took out his own clothes and tried to leave the infirmary room... only for Izumi to hurriedly step in and stop him.

"W-what are you doing!? You need to rest your body for now!"

"No problem! I've been moving my body around the past few days, and I seem fine. What's more, I don't want to spend my time resting here, only to

regret it later."

Seeing Rudel, Basyle,

"As expected of Rudel-sama! ... But if you push yourself and break something, you won't be able to participate in the tournament. So don't push yourself, let's start out with some light exercise to build up your stamina."

She hammered in the point with a smile. Hearing it from both of them, even Rudel couldn't push himself too far... or so it should have been.

"You're right, the basics are important... should I train myself from the ground up again? Or should I learn a new special move?"

As Rudel thought to himself, Basyle informed him.

"Rudel-sama, could you make some time in the coming break? If you do, I, Basyle , shall offer you the finest training there is."

As she said something, Izumi felt somewhat doubtful, but she couldn't think Basyle would do anything to put Rudel at a disadvantage, so she stayed silent. Based on Rudel's response, she intended to join in as well.

"Really!? Then I'm all yours."

Rudel gave an energetic reply. Smiles on their faces, the three of them boldly tried to exit the infirmary, only to be stopped by the doctors and nurses.

Chapter 24: The Upperclassman and the Boy

They were the events of the second term's end, where the school entered an extended break. While Rudel would usually return home, he followed Basyle's orders, informing his house, and remaining at the academy. Though a letter of complaint did come in from his younger sister Lena...

"And so? What are we supposed to do?"

Izumi—who didn't return home every year—told Basyle she would take part, forming up a party of three. In the academy cafeteria, Basyle replied to her question as if it was natural.

"I'll have you pick up real combat experience. Not in the sort of forest the academy would have an outing to, we're going to a place of higher danger."

Saying that, she spread a map across the cafeteria table. Marked on it was a place not too close or too far from their present location. Named Mt. Aberless, the mountain wasn't particularly tall.

"On this mountain, monsters appear every year and inflict casualties on the villages in the area. This year, the casualties were especially great, and it seems they're quite troubled."

"Wait, so you mean... you're putting me and Rudel to work? What part of that is training!?"

Izumi interrogated Basyle. Basyle had in fact taken up a job, and planned to earn money from it. But without letting those emotions show on her face,

"True combat experience outweighs all else. And as snow piles in the area, the footing is bad. Battle will be dangerous... but will that stop you, Rudel-sama?"

To Basyle's question,

"No, that's just what I want. If I don't go that far, I'll even feel uneasy going up against Aleist, Luecke, and Eunius."

"The training period is two weeks. During that period, you'll fight the

monsters attacking a village, and protect it from damages.”

Hearing that explanation, Rudel and Izumi... Izumi felt it was almost as if they were accepting a job, feeling somewhat angry over its contents, but she decided that as long as Rudel agreed, then there was no helping it.

“... And lastly”

“Hmm?”

“Could you call out to one more person? That’ll increase the efficiency.”

Izumi was more than convinced this was a job under the pretense of training. And at Basyle’s convenience, one of the academy’s remaining students was to become a sacrifice... Vargas.

As he wasn’t returning to his hometown this year, and he was planning out how to spend his time at the academy, Vargas was apprehended by Rudel. At first he was reluctant, but once he learned Basyle was coming along, he suddenly became eager. Already a fourth year student, there were no objections to Vargas’ basic fighting capabilities. And with his participation, Basyle was delighted as well.



“Oy! Oy, Rudel!”

Entering a village almost buried in the snow, the four carried out lookout and subjugation. But it’s not as if they were always fighting monsters. So when they had time, they shoveled the snow so they wouldn’t be buried in it.

“What is it, Vargas?”

Wearing a thick coat over his equipment, Rudel’s snow-shoveling hands stopped as he turned to face Vargas.

“Isn’t this strange? It’s strange, right! We’re supposed to be guarding this village, and yet we’re out here guarding the folks who go into the mountain to shovel snow... that’s definitely strange!”

Vargas shook, his hands stopped as he spoke to Rudel. From Rudel’s point of view, this wasn’t a job. But this was a bonafide request Basyle had taken up, and while doing odd jobs in the village connected to the mountain, they were

doing honest-to-goodness work.

"You think? It lets you train up your legs, and the story the elders tell are interesting. Then there's moving without a presence, and living alongside the mountain..."

"What are you enjoying yourself for!? Not that, I'm asking whether doing something like this will make you stronger or not! I'm fine, but you can't lose, right!?"

On Vargas' words, Rudel burst into laughter.

"W-what are you laughing for?"

"Sorry, sorry... I was just so happy, I couldn't help it. And I think I'm on the verge of grasping something, so I'm fine."

So with a smile, Rudel resumed shoveling snow. Rudel thought there was a deep meaning in why Basyle had chosen this place. It's true Basyle intended for him to experience real combat... but that was about it.

Rudel simply sought out meaning in it. Just as those who sought to learn could learn from anything, Rudel learned much from the people living alongside the mountain. And even from his enemy monsters... he learned the fact they were alive.

"Don't go against a large force, you have to use its flow against it. Gather your power on one point. Your body's center should always be..."

As Rudel started muttering to himself, Vargas tried asking.

"What's that?"

"The people of the village were talking about it. I'm sure it's the fundamentals of something."

To be blunt, it wasn't a fundamental of anything. Within the villagers' daily lives, the words came out when they spoke of how to move a heavy object, and Rudel just read too deeply into it. From there, Rudel dragged out the knowledge contained within himself and thought. He thought and thought... and finally realized.

It was the final day of that two-week period. A number of large monkey-

shaped monsters appeared on the outskirts of town. Wrapped in white fur, they were ferocious carnivores that could move swiftly across the snow. Their size was around that of a human, but on snowy terrain, no human legs could catch up... it was the moment such monsters appeared.

Rudel went out alone. As if he didn't even hear Basyle and Izumi's calls to stop him, and when Vargas hurriedly rushed out to bring him back in... one of the monkeys came at Rudel.

Vargas cursed his ill fortune that Izumi and Basyle weren't nearby.

But Rudel lightly swung the sword he had in one hand... splitting the monster in two.

"Eh? Eeeeeh!!?"

Upon witnessing the scene, Vargas couldn't keep silent. Just two weeks! Could someone really become so strong just from protecting a village? No! They couldn't!!! But even so, Rudel produced results.

Surprised by his strength, the other monsters attacked to avenge their comrade. While two came at him simultaneously, Rudel didn't move from the spot, fire magic on his left hand and the sword in his right... As the two of them launched his attack, he sent a small ball of fire magic at one.

From its minuscule size, the monster charged without fear, but once it collided with the ball, it raised an explosion. Blown back, it became a black lump of charcoal alight... around that time, the remaining monster was cut down the moment it entered the range of Rudel's sword.

It was an abnormal scene. So abnormal Vargas didn't know what to say. The small fireball was actually a magic compressed to its very limit, and by channeling magic into his sword, he had created a shockwave. To be blunt, it was crazy.

"Still too many unnecessary movements. I have to somehow approach Aleist's level before the tournament, no I have to surpass him..."

As Rudel put his sword away... Vargas thought. He looked at Rudel, who failed to give off the air of someone who had fought a dangerous monster, standing neatly over the snow.

"You've already surpassed him!"

Vargas unintentionally shouted out. His strength would pass as an upperclassman, and Vargas thought he may even eat into their upper ranks. Rudel had likely become even stronger than him... but Rudel,

"No, I still have a ways to go. I still want to become strong. Not just in power and technique, I want to become strong of heart."

"You're plenty strong already! As you are, you can become a dragoon, I tell you!"

Shying away bashfully at Vargas's words, Rudel answered.

"I'm sure if I'm satisfied, then that will be the end... continuing to look higher is just right for me. And this world is vast, with plenty of people stronger than me. If I don't keep setting my sights, I'll be left behind in no time."

Vargas suddenly felt as if those words were directed at him. As if they were addressing his thoughts just now, that he would be no match for Rudel.

"I'm no match for you... always looking forwards, never giving up. I'm envious."

As he said such a thing, Vargas made a sorrowful face.

"Vargas, do you have a dream? An objective?"

"M-my dream? ... Well, I want to ease the load on my place back home, and become a big brother my little brothers and sisters can be proud of... but I don't have a splendid dream like you."

Approaching Vargas, Rudel grasped his shoulders with both hands.

"That's a splendid dream! A while back, I made fun of my brother's dream. I regretted it throughout my hospitalization, and I was thinking to apologize. It's never a mistake to work hard towards your dream. And... if they saw you now, I'm sure your little siblings will see a brother to be proud of!"

Rudel knew Vargas was working hard. Waking up early every morning to train. They saw each other every day. As Rudel said such a thing with a serious face, it was Vargas' turn to be bashful. He was happy, but from the village, the villagers were looking over them with warm smiles.

"T-thanks. This is kinda embarrassing... more importantly, we should clean up."

Saying that, Vargas pointed at the monster corpses. Ending the conversation, they went into the cleanup, but Vargas remained bashful, and a little glad.



From the village, Basyle looked over that heartwarming duo, Rudel and Vargas.

"You're not going to help out?"

On Izumi's question, Basyle shrugged her shoulders. Her usual light wear would be too cold here, so now she wore a thick coat, but her body's lines were still vaguely evident.

"I'd feel sorry for them if I went out now. Let's show some tact."

"When you just want to slack off... even so, when did Rudel learn that technique?"

The swordplay and magic Rudel displayed... just knowing they were on a different level than before cost the two a bit of mulling. But Basyle,

"Well, with this it looks like I won't have to change my employer, so I have no complaints. I never even imagined he would grow this strong, after all."

Basyle smiled as she looked over Rudel and Vargas. Izumi had lost her understanding of Basyle. Why had she done such a thing? In the first place, when Rudel couldn't become an archduke anymore, from her point of view, he should have lost his value. While Izumi's thoughts started showing on her face, Basyle,

"Rudel-sama sure is interesting... I'm sure I won't tire of him anytime soon."

Gave a vague answer as she returned to the village inn... so she ran after all. Izumi concluded.

Chapter 25: The Doll Princess, The Three Idiots, and Royalty

As the school entered its third term, Rudel's class was the epitome of seriousness. They prepared for the tournament to such an extent the homeroom teacher said it was the first he had ever seen in all his years of teaching. The class year separated tournament was a place to show the fruits of one's work over the past two years. It was a passionate event every year, but as the royal family was coming this time around, the passion put in was something else entirely.

And Rudel's class was even above that, they put in their passion to save Rudel from his forceful graduation. And in this tournament with a new level of passion, the top pick class held a strained atmosphere.

After the incident of the second term, Aleist had become the academy's hero, but the class' air took a turn for the worst. The verbal brawls in the forest still held a resounding effect. But even so, there weren't any student able to launch a complaint against Aleist's strength, so the class' dissatisfactions would only build up. At this point, speaking ill of Aleist-who rarely ever came to class at this point-had become their diversion.

Within that situation, the tournament was about to open.

And as Rudel's class devoted themselves to training, Leucke and Eunius appeared, leading along the representatives of their own classes. In that evening ground, the students of three classes gathered, letting out something of a peculiar air.

"Rudel, I heard the story. I know your class's goal in this tournament."

On the words Luecke started up with, Rudel's class embraced a light hope of his possible cooperation. Even Izumi thought, if it was these Three Lords who got along well, then... she hoped. But Eunius continued on.

"We heard, but we've decided to beat you down with all our strength. In this time's tournament, you'll face Luecke in the first match, and if you win, you'll

be going up against us. And if you manage to luck your way through that one, Aleist's class will be your final opponent. You've got no hopes of victory."

After saying that, the two of them led off their class representatives. Those words caused Izumi to feel down. The two of them towered over the rest in the fields of magic and swordplay. If they wanted to win against those two classes, they would have to utilize the fact this was a team battle. A stream of one-on-one matches... the moment she thought that. Rudel called out to the two leaving parties.

"I'm participating in the last slot! How about you two?"

He boldly proclaimed his order in the lineup! Within the dubious air that surrounded the space, the two simply raised their hands to answer before walking off.

"W-wha-what are you talking about, Rudel!!?"

Izumi's voice echoed through the grounds.



The class representatives that tagged along the leaving two called out to their own class leaders.

"A-are you sure about this, Luecke-sama? If Arses-sama doesn't win this time around..."

To the representative who said that, Luecke spoke.

"Just you try slacking off in the tournament. I'll never forgive you."

As Luecke stated it coldly, Eunius stopped and looked over everyone. And with his ferocious features, he made a declaration.

"In this time's tournament, holding back is more unforgivable than losing! I don't care about the other classes, but don't go light on Rudel's class!"

"Hah, Eunius... in that case, you can't complain if you lose before you even go up against Rudel's class."

In regards to Luecke's sigh, Eunius answered with a laugh.

"Are you an idiot? As if we'd ever lose to anyone besides Aleist's or Rudel's

classes... I decided I'd never hold back against him."

It wasn't as if Luecke or Eunius were giving it their all because they hated Rudel or anything. They recognized his skill, so they would give it their all. They'd seriously take him on, and wouldn't complain whether they won or lost... that was their conclusion.

"Because Rudel would never forgive us if we held back on him."

"That bastard... he even made a challenge to us. What are you going to do, Luecke?"

Turning to Rudel's class in the distance, Luecke,

"It goes without saying, I'll take him on personally... I'll be taking the last slot."

On those words, Luecke's class made a stir. If they wanted to win, then it would be best not to put Luecke up against Rudel. But continuing on with that answer, Eunius also,

"And of course so will I! I wanted to fight him at least once."

Eunius also turned towards Rudel's class. There, he could confirm the form of Izumi chasing Rudel around. And caught by Izumi, Rudel called out towards the two.

"I... No! We will definitely win!!!"

A smile at that voice, the two walked off. Chased behind by their classmates... and even further back, they could hear the laughing voices of Rudel and his class.



The day of the tournament. In the assembly hall, the King of Courtois, Albach Courtois, his Queen, Ciel Courtois, and the First Princess, Aileen Courtois took their places in the noble visitor room, looking down over the hall that was to be the stage of this tournament.

Protected by high knights, the three of them quietly looked over the hall. To their side, the headmaster made himself scarce. And to that room, the Second Princess Fina made her entrance. Right, the one who invited her family was Fina.

"You look well, Fina. Though it's only been a month since we last met."

Her father, the king, said and laughed.

"You still can't show expression? I thought you would get better if you attended the academy, but..."

Her mother, the queen, spat some cynicism. After the king soothed her some, the queen,

"Fina, how's school? I never attended, so I'm quite interested... you wouldn't say anything about it during the break, could you tell me about how things are going?"

"It's been quite a while, father, mother... and sister."

As she gave a perfect curtsy, Fina's expressionless face showed no signs of change. The emotions she held towards her family,

(Our royal family really is a hopeless one... Aileen's especially dangerous! If she ever found out about my little kitten Mii... that girl would definitely come to kill her! I say it with conviction! Mother's, well, she's the same as always, and father is... I guess he's decent?)

She held a subdued impression of her family.

Fina took her seat in the noble visitor room, looking over the assembly hall... in the hall filled to the brim with students, there were various banners and flags hoisted up in support of their own classes. The zeal of the hall was only heightened by the presence of royalty.

(How sweltering... when I can endure the heat of Mii's fluffiness, how should I put it... if it's for the fluff, then I...!!!)

As she expressionlessly thought over such things, her father posed her a question.

"So how is it? According to you, the Arses house's eldest son is a proficient one, and I've heard something similar from both a high knight and dragoon... how should I put it, with all these reports coming in from the left field, I'm troubled to respond. Cattleya seems to hate him considerably, you know? And from the documents, it's hard to say that he's skilled. Though I will say he's

interesting."

"The Arses House is a disgraced one. At present, they're included among the Three Lords in name alone... the moment I heard you had interest in such a house's eldest son, to be honest, I felt doubtful, Fina."

Her mother who couldn't even speak if she didn't mix in some sarcasm. As she naturally ignored it, her sister Aileen,

"He's a battle lover, right? Such savage folk, they're no different from the demi-humans. I hate those sorts! If it's about holding power, then the Hardie House's Aleist-dono Cattleya spoke so highly of is most ideal. Don't you think so, Fina?"

"... Perhaps?"

Fina gave a vague reply. But inside...

(Eh? That homo's your type? So that's the sort of thing you're into... I don't think I'll ever get you, sis. Nothing greater than fluff exists in this world! Ah! But master is separate! That man is a national treasure of Courtois! A treasure!!! Even so, it seems she hates fluff... I mean demi-humans as much as ever.)

As they carried on such a conversation, the competitors offered a bow to the royal family. The family waved their hands in response, but...

"Good grief... to waste my time on something like this..."

"There are demi-humans among them. Why are they sending out demi-humans? They should just cut down their numbers and send some humans out..."

"Hah, calm down a bit, both of you. Try learning from Fina."

While the conversation was shifted to Fina,

(Oy, oy!!! Look at all the demi-fluffies... hah, hah... forgive me, Mii! I might end up cheating on you!!!)

... she was the worst off of the bunch.

Chapter 26: The Magic Idiot and the Dragon Idiot

In the tournament waiting room, the second years of the fundamental curriculum gathered. Everyone present was a representative of their class, and a person of skill. Within all that, the matches commenced one after the next... and it was finally time for Rudel's class to go up against Luecke's. Both classes exited the waiting room. Rudel and Luecke walked alongside one another.

"I'll be giving it my all, Rudel."

"Yeah, I won't go easy on you either. I'll fight with all I have."

Without locking eyes, the two of them entered the hall, waiting until the final match came to pass. It was a team battle between five representatives, and Rudel's class won the first and second matches to make the score two on two. With that, it would all be decided by the final bout, but more than any of that, the two of them could only concentrate on the worthy foe before their eyes.

"And now the round's final battle shall commence!"

Alongside the referee's signal, Luecke began to take distance to contest with his specialty magic. But Rudel wouldn't allow it as he closed in the gap. Luecke was aware he couldn't beat Rudel when it came to speed. So he cut forward to lock up his sword.

"...!!!"

The wooden sword Luecke had swung to protect against Rudel's was splendidly knock and sent spiraling through the air. And as Rudel went right on the offense,

"Not yet!!!!"

Luecke used magic at a close range. Normally, using it like that would be much too dangerous... normally, that is! But even so, there was some worth in his cast. The explosion blew him back, letting him take distance from Rudel. Luecke had suffered injury at his own magic. But even so, he had taken distance. And it was from here that Leucke could exhibit his proper role.

Shooting a consecutive stream of elementary magic at Rudel, he prepared his

own trumpcard. It wasn't as easy as it sounded, and there was a possibility of failure. But even so, Luecke had decided to challenge this match with all his might.

He attacked Rudel with a magic of wind, but the attack was evaded by Rudel's magic-enhanced stride. Even for Rudel, it was difficult to avoid shots from the magic-specialized Luecke.

"Even so!"

Rudel dodged faster than he could speak. But still invoking elementary magic, Luecke continued his stream of attacks. As Rudel avoided it, he tried to close the distance once more.

Just like Luecke, he used elementary magic as a diversion to close in... then stopped. The moment he tried to draw closer, Luecke had finished his preparations. Sensing the danger, Rudel leapt back, and Luecke used a majority of his mana to invoke advanced magic.

Wary of that previous self-damaging move, Rudel had drawn back, but now he felt a sliver of regret. He should've just closed in the distance.

For the students of the fundamental curriculum, advanced magic was much too dangerous... but Luecke's magic activated perfectly. Flames mingled in with a tempest of wind, the ring that made up the contest grounds wrapped in a pillar of flames.

"How about that, Rudel!!"

From an overuse of magic, and the damage he inflicted on himself, Luecke staggered. The hall raised a stir over Luecke's magic and concerns for Rudel's safety. Just as the referee hurriedly stepped in to call an end... the storm of flames split in two and faded away... Atop the ring, Rudel's wooden sword let off a faint light. Rudel had taken a downward swing...

Perhaps he had pushed it, as Rudel's breath was also rough.

"... Impossible. You really are something, Rudel!"

Giving a delighted laugh, Luecke knew he had to answer to his first friend besides Eunius who he could go up against so seriously, firing his magic... but

with his advanced magic and consecutive use of elementary spells, he was already running out of mana. Even so, he kept his ground without giving up on the match.

Luecke could see Rudel's approach in slow motion. He recalled the environment he had found himself in from a young age. A harsh education devoid of any existences he had called friends. Even back then, Luecke had loved magic, and he wanted someone to talk about it with. He wanted to talk all about his beloved magic. But even after coming to the university, his status as heir to an archduke name caused those around to take distance.

The lone exception Eunius remained focused on his sword, and their conversations wouldn't match. Even if he talked about his beloved magic, everyone would only affirm him. At the end, he found out they would affirm even if he told a lie. A boring life, day after day.

And yet Luecke had finally found a friend he could talk with. Rudel. Generally, magic went without saying, but he could follow along in conversations besides that, and talking about magic with the Rudel-ever earnest in everything-was fun... though he still couldn't accept that book called How to Pet a Dragon.

While Rudel's intuitive remarks stood out, Luecke would laugh as he went on about the theoretics. From those around, it looked like a foolish talk between men, but it was really a conversation over high-level magics.

And Luecke had challenged Rudel to a serious match. He had considered holding back to save his friend. His first true friend... if possible, he wanted to enjoy his school life alongside him.

But even so... he knew Rudel wouldn't find any delight in such a thing, and he couldn't hold back against his friend. His vision teetered and it became difficult for Luecke to set his focus.

"Rudel, you alone are...!!!"

The magic he wrung out the last of his power to fire would never go off... Rudel's wood sword perfectly touched against the nape of his neck.

"W-winner! Rudel Arses!"

After a while of silence, the referee's voice resounded through the hall. The

space filled with the mingled cheers and jeers of all manner of spectators. Hearing that, Rudel put away his wood sword, out of breath. As if finally able to rest, Luecke crumbled at the knees. Rudel lent him a hand to stand.

“Luecke, thank you.”

“... It’s not like I let you win. I’ll be the victor next time... so don’t lose until then.”



Watching their match from the noble visitor room, the royal family, and their high knight guards... the headmaster was also present.

“That was splendid... that archduke heirs have grown up wonderfully.”

Hearing her father’s words, Fina was supposed to be delighted.

“Yes. Rudel-dono is strong... Luecke-dono as well.”

(The hell are you doing, Luecke!!? You trying to make master lose? Aren’t you friends!? Just give it to him!!! And why are there nothing but monsters in master’s class’s block... someone must have set this up!!!)

... Instead, she was considerably flustered. She sent a glance at the headmaster. In her head, the headmaster was one of the suspects.

“But... headmaster, isn’t this time’s tournament just a little bit strange?”

(Out with it already! If you try to crush my plan... I won’t keep quiet about the fact you twisted up my testimony on the incident!)

The headmaster answered Fina’s expressionless glance. By the way, the one who twisted Fina’s testimony in the report was not the headmaster.

“Sure enough, there are many of the top contenders in this block. But the academy hasn’t done any injustice.”

Fina doubted the headmaster’s words. The rest of the royal family watched the next match in disinterest... as truth would have it, this tournament’s ordering had been decided by lots drawn by class representatives. No one had done any dishonesty.

The headmaster looked at Rudel returning to the waiting room at the start of the next match as he thought.

(No matter how many times we redid it, all the strong foes ended up in this block. Even after redoing the drawing five separate times... that child's path is a harsh one.)

Resisting the urge to let out a sigh, he explained the next match to the royal family. And listening to that explanation, the king looked at the daughter, the start of these events... from an early age, she wouldn't show expression on her face... no, perhaps she couldn't. And this was his daughter's first selfish request.

To save the person she owed her life to... after some investigation, he learned that the reports regarding Rudel had been overwritten to an abnormal extent, and he had even considered reexamining his verdict. But the Arses House in question wished for punishment unto the individual, and even if they were royalty, there was a limit to how far they could stick their mouths into the circumstances of an archduke house.

For that sake, he had made this visit alongside the tournament. Even if he didn't come out on top, he would award him some sort of reward for his effort... and saying that, he would see him off to a proper graduation, or so he had thought, but...

(I got to see something surprisingly interesting. Rudel and Luecke... and Eunius. What interesting children.)

In this visit, he had discovered a separate something outside his daughter's request. He wished he had a son of that caliber... could it be those three had become friends? Had they supported each other to this point? Would they hold each other up henceforth? King Albach thought.



The King of Courtois, Alabach Courtois, was even more of a side character than Rudel in-game. He was treated in a manner where you could almost call him a mob character. His name came out a few times, his face flashed across the screen only once in the war event... as the surrounding female members had much more of a role than needed, the king never said a single word.

As such a character, the king didn't have any detailed setting to back him. When even the queen had a hidden romance event... if you thought of it like that, perhaps he was quite the pitiful king indeed.

Chapter 27: Big Sister and Little Sister

The tournament's first round fights had all concluded, and the second round was about to commence. As the royal family was watching this time around, the match times had shortened. And in the first round, they were conducted using other facilities as well. Fina's hopes taken into account, they had set their eyes on Rudel's block.

"The second round, eh... the next class is a strong one."

Izumi looked at the tournament's match sheet as she muttered to Rudel. Rudel had his own thoughts on the matter.

"Is there anyone strong in it? The strong people in our year... I won against Luecke, but apart from him, only Aleist and Eunius are coming to mind."

At Rudel's thought process, Izumi felt her head hurt. From the Rudel-constantly in the academy's top rankings-point of view, the other students weren't a threat. But this tournament was a team competition. There was no point if Rudel won his match alone.

"Hah, if the rest of us don't win, we can't rise in this tournament."

To Izumi's words, Rudel smiled.

"It'll be alright! We'll definitely win!"

Rudel answered full of confidence. Seeing him like that, the other representative of his class smiled too. Switching gears, Izumi stated the name of her next opponent.

"Millia... so I'm taking on the elf Millia."

Right, the second battle put Izumi up against Millia.



So Rudel's class entered the second round, and by the time it came down to Izumi's second-to-last slot, the score was at one win and two losses! Izumi was burdened with quite the heavy responsibility. And her opponent Millia was also a problem... for some reason, she was glaring at her. Not because this was a

competition, or because she was serious... she was just glaring.

"Do your best, Izumi!"

Mixed in with her classmates cheering her on from outside the ring, Rudel rooted for her with all his might. And the more he did, the more Millia glared. Equipped with a bow, she stood with a load of practice arrows prepared.

Millia's mind was plagued by Rudel. And she felt disdain for his goal of being a dragoon. The reason lay in her elder sister Lilim. While being an elf, she had become a dragoon, one of Courtois' elites.

Lilim held considerable abilities, even among the elves, and the clan placed their expectations on her... after realizing Lilim's secret, her elven betrothed annulled their engagement. With that as a trigger, Lilim began taking distance from the notions of elves and clans. She had chosen to be a dragoon of Courtois over an oppressed elf.

Millia's beloved sister was now a dog of the humans... and this time, the dragoons had even enraptured the one on Millia's mind. While she was well aware her anger was misplaced, she still couldn't bring herself to like the organization.

"... I have no grudge against you. But I shall be fighting with all my might."

Alongside the starting call, wings appeared on Millia's back. Half-transparent glowing wings... and Millia freely jumped about the area over the ring... right, it wasn't flight, it was hopping.

"Kuh! What movements!"

Taking distance, and once she circled around back, she launched a stream of attacks with her bow. Izumi reacted well and dodged... but it was at that moment. Izumi ended up muttering. The bug often seen in the kitchen... the black demon that hopped around.

"Just like a bug!"

Snap! The ring's air change so suddenly it was almost audible. Those wings that were an elf's specialty, or rather trait, it's not as if you couldn't say they resembled a bug's wings over a bird's. And her flapping whenever she leapt,

they were just assisting her jump strength, but... it did look quite bug-like.

Elves were aware of that, and mindful of it. Reactions varied by the individual... Millia went into the frenzy.

"Y-you... what did you just say? No, I heard you, don't bother answering... you called me a bug. You'd better prepare yourself!!!"

Millia accelerated in her next bound. Unable to keep up with her movements, Izumi took some practice arrows across her body. Even if they were for practice, if they hit, they would hurt and inflict injury.

In regards to Millia's violent bounds, Izumi stopped moving altogether. Sharpening her senses, instead of seeing Millia's movements with her eyes, she tried to foresee them. Feeling the sound of her rhythm and the attacks of her bow, Izumi made a prediction, closed the distance in an instant and hammered in an attack.

Millia avoided Izumi's swipe by the breadth of a hair. But Izumi didn't let the gap she created slip through. In that space, Izumi grasped Millia's ankle, making for a one-sided development. As Millia was unable to move, Izumi thrust her wooden sword at her neck.

And unable to escape, Millia vexingly muttered.

"I-I admit my loss."

Hearing that, the referee declared Izumi's victory. Feeling that she had successfully fulfilled her responsibility, Izumi pat her chest. And as she did, Rudel jumped at her.

"That was amazing, Izumi! Catching a skipping elf!"

Rudel happily praised Izumi. But seeing that, Millia only glared at her more. As the foe who beat her, and the woman who called her a bug... and while she didn't quite understand why, she recognized Izumi as a source of her unease.



"That was quite a boring match. An elf doing nothing but running away!"

Princess Aileen gave her impression of the match. In regards to that, Fina surprisingly held the same opinion. An elf just running away... there should have

been more contact, more fluffing! As she thought such a thing, Fina...

(When there wasn't even any petting involved, I hate myself for getting so heated up! Hah, hah... let me nibble on those eaaarrrrs!!!)

Unlike Fina, Aileen hated demi-humans.

The demi-human hater Aileen. Once upon a time, her carriage was attacked by goblins on the move. To be more precise, it faced an attack from multiple monsters. Seeing the attacking goblins up close, Aileen cried and screamed, making for quite a sorry sight. That itself wasn't much of a problem.

Aileen was young at the time, and if monsters attacked, then anyone would feel fear. But the problem was that Aileen was a princess. A princess attacked by monsters... of course, responsibility would have to be taken by the knight who served as her guard. And the one in question happened to be Aileen's first love.

By a stroke of ill luck, or perhaps fate, the knight who carried out the execution was a demi-human. She had shown her disgraceful form to her first love, and after a period of brooding, she only learned of his death a long while later. A young girl at the time, she couldn't get by without someone to hate, yet at her base, she still remained a kind girl.

It was around that time that she started to twist. The demi-humans disturbing public order should just go away... then we'd have a peaceful world for humans alone... Aileen honestly believed it.

"Calm down, Aileen... just look at Fina. She's always calm, never flustered by anything. You have to take a lesson from her as part of the royal family."

The king soothed Aileen's agitation. The one he compared her too was looking at Rudel's split-second defeat of his opponent in the final match.

(As expected of master!!! Just a bit of genius! And there he goes! But make sure you hold back when you're going against fluffies!)

Expressionless to the end, and free to no ends.

Chapter 28: The Sword Idiot and the Dragon Idiot

Steadily winning its way through, Rudel's class was to go against Eunius' in the semifinals. In their block with nothing but strong foes, by the time they reached the semifinals, both sides were in tatters. In truth, Eunius was injured here and there. But Rudel...

"R-Rudel, are you alright?"

Izumi asked Rudel in worry. In his match with Luecke, he had taken a hit from advanced magic. And before that, he had taken on a consecutive stream. After that, he had easily managed to win his way through, but... here and there, his body was wrapped in bandages, making him a painful sight.

"No problem at all. My body can move."

He said as he spun his shoulders. His body moved... don't you mean moved with pain? Izumi thought, but this tournament was one they had to win at all costs. Even if they had to push themselves, she thought and concentrated on match.

And the match that began... up to the final matchup, they somehow obtained four straight wins! Rudel's class's advancement was already set in stone. While both sides were worn out, when it came to feelings, Rudel's class was winning.



The final match held a surprisingly subdued air. With the semifinal score at four to one... from the tattered Rudel's point of view, there was no reason to push himself here. Right, normally, he should've just preserved his strength for the finals without damaging his body any further.

Rudel and Eunius stood opposite one another, waiting for the referee's signal. Within all that, Eunius struck up a conversation.

"Good grief... why does my class have to be such a nuisance? Hey, Rudel... I know I'm being selfish, but could you take me on seriously? No, even if you don't, I'll be going at you with the intent to kill."

Not with his usual raptor-like smile, Eunius made a grin full of self-derision.

Rudel gave his request a serious answer.

"What are you talking about? Of course I'll fight you seriously! I'm going to protect the promise we made on the grounds!"

Eunius' eyes widened in surprise as he burst into a bit of laughter. The wood sword he had prepared for himself was a longsword intended for use in both hands. As he held it aloft to take a stance, Rudel prepared his own sword as well. The referee-who had been hesitating over whether to interrupt their conversation or not-determined that as long as they weren't going to carry out a half-assed fight before the royal family, then all was well as he signaled the start.

"I've taken a liking to that idiotic part of you! Now come at me for real, Rudel!!!"

The two clashed head-on. Eunius focused solely on his sword, while Rudel adopted a style of freely switching between wood sword and spell. Comparing the two of them, Eunius displayed a surprisingly elegant array of skills, while Rudel's fighting style was rough and violent.

Rudel's swordplay that focused on winning as the premise was closer to a mercenary's than a noble. His magic added on, it was a battle Eunius was unfit for... those around were sure to think.

But in truth, Rudel was being pushed back. With Eunius' flowing sword strokes, and the difference in power born from his physique... they all served to torment Rudel, and Eunius was used to dodging magic. With magic as his weak suite, Eunius' fighting style was a simple one.

Don't give them a chance to use magic. If they do use it, then dodge.

Simple in concept, difficult in practice, Eunius exhibited the full brunt of his philosophy against Rudel. What's more, his attacks were connecting. Rudel was the one unable to handle his barrage.

"Are you having fun, Rudel!? Right now, I'm having the time of my life!!! That you can follow me to this level-that you'll take me on seriously-you really know how to make a man happy!"

Rudel fended off Eunius' consecutive attacks. Knowing things would be bad at

this rate, he channeled magic into his sword to cut through Eunius' blade of wood. But sensing the irregularity, Eunius took distance from him. Seeing Rudel's glowing sword, Eunius noticed.

As he took distance, Rudel switched over to a mid-range magic battle. And dodging his attacks, Eunius,

"Pouring magic into your sword? Nice... that's one way of doing it!"

Stopping in his tracks and taking a stance, Eunius cut right through the magic coming at him. Sending magic into his blade, he had mastered the same magic technique in an instant. But there was one difference. As Eunius never used any magic, he had plenty of it to spare.

In contrast to Rudel's sword that could at most give off a faint glow, Eunius' wooden sword shook as his magic reserves poured from the blade. Using that quivering stream of energy, Eunius cut at Rudel. Rudel naturally stopped it with his own sword, but the sword's magic coating moving like a whip slicing into Rudel's face.

This time, Rudel tried to take some distance, but Eunius wouldn't allow it. Rudel was instantly put at a disadvantage.



The man called Eunius who showed rapid growth in the midst of battle, in the game he appeared as the 'Sword Prodigy'. While being a noble, he preferred freedom, and he was a reliable existence gentle to everyone. He had a sense of duty, and if you put him into the leadership role of a party, there was no doubt it would become a main force... he was that sort of character.

But that setting had always tormented Eunius. As a high-ranking noble, reasonable sword talent was more than enough. As his role would be to take command on the battlefield, Eunius would never go out on the front lines.

Eunius loved his own sword, and he earnestly took on his training. But he had no stage to test his limits. Everyone showed restraint from his position as a high noble. Even in the school's matches, they'd all come and lose to curry favor with the boy.

Precisely from his talent, Eunius could notice it with ease. It all felt so empty.

He had once even thought to cast aside his status. But his sense of duty wouldn't allow it. Casting away his family... his people, and living by the sword? Eunius was incapable of such a thing. So he had given up on ever having a serious locking of blades.

Everything else was favorable. He had good friends in school, and even a girlfriend. He'd slip out of the academy and hit the town, and if it all came down to enjoying his student life, there were no problems.

The one who appeared around that time was Rudel. He met the boy who could only set his sight on being a dragoon, even if meant throwing away his family and people. Eunius had his hopes. If it was against him, perhaps he could have a serious match... there were no problems with his ability or will.

Around when he came to think it, talks of this tournament came around. To Eunius who couldn't tell if Rudel's feelings would ever change, if he let this chance slip by, he might never have the match he sought for the rest of his life... he thought.

If Rudel didn't see the value in a serious match with him, then never again... would he come at him with enough force to kill? He wondered.



Rudel ran around, and Eunius gave chase... at the moment he thought that pattern would repeat. Rudel went on the offense. Stopping his use of magic, he cut at Eunius with all his might. That wooden sword with magic channeled in, if it hit the wrong place, it would deliver a swift demise.

"That's right! Come at me like you're trying to strike me dead!!!"

Eunius put all the magic he had into his sword. And in regards to Rudel's attack, he had decided to counter. Rudel barely dodged. But Rudel's wood sword had been torn to pieces. In the instant he knew he couldn't hit Rudel, he had changed focus to his sword.

"It's my win...!!!"

Enuius tried to convince himself of his victory. But throwing down his sword, Rudel stepped into Eunius' bosom emptyhanded. Fearing not Eunius' instant response to counterattack, he touched the palms of both hands to Eunius

chest... firing compressed wind magic with all his might.

Without any time, a single attack in a lapse of concentration... but even so, it was an attack from point blank. There was no way it was ineffective!

Eunius was blown out of the hall. He tried to stand, but by the rules, those who left the premise were disqualified. Even so, he tried to stand... feeling an intense pain run through his chest, he found his body wouldn't rise as he willed it.

"Winner, Rudel Arses!"

And Eunius lost. He had lost a serious match. As he heard the cheers from the audience seats, Eunius collapsed down and looked up at the sky. It was already evening, the sky was died a shade of orange.

"Why can't I move... let me have a bit more fun! Just a little more..."

Eunius' tears came out. The more fun he had come to learn, the more he couldn't forgive when it came to its end. There, dragging along his body, Rudel stepped down from the ring.

"It was fun, Eunius. Let's have another match... if we do, I'm sure I can rise to greater heights."

Rudel said such a thing with a smile. Of beaten body, the two of them were in terrible states. The one the prodigy Eunius lost too was an average man whose talents fell short. But his form as he continued setting his eyes on higher sights, Eunius saw greatness in him.

"You're amazing... yeah, let's fight again. So you have to stay in the academy."

Their classmates raced over to them. And the two were quickly carried off to the infirmary... even with shorter matches, the tournament had taken more time than expected, and the finals were to be postponed to the following day.

The finals against Aleist's class was the only match that remained.

Chapter 29: The Protagonist and the Supporting Role

The Second day of the tournament began with a peculiar air. The first year student matches ended without issue, and the princess' class claimed victory... Chlust also participated as a representative and showed off his mettle. There were a number of matches that were suspicious no matter how you looked at them, but before the royal family, they were fought fair and square.

And the base of that abnormal air was, of course, Rudel. Rudel's classmates were in tatters, but Rudel's state was much worse. That was simply how severe his fights with the top candidates Luecke and Eunius had been.

Right, he was worn out, but...

"It's finally here! We're definitely going to win!"

He was terribly energetic. In the hall, Luecke and Eunius who had slipped out of the infirmary... and Vargas alongside the upperclassmen who trained with him every morning were there. Mixed in with them, Basyle had also come to cheer him on.

In such a hall, Aleist's class on the opposite side of the ring looked at Rudel's tattered comrades in relief. They had been wary of Rudel's class, that had managed to win its way through this block of strong foes, but with this, they were sure they could come out on top.



And from the start, the finals were a heated affair. Regardless of the leisure Aleist's class let off, Rudel's class somehow managed to hang on. At the final matchup, the results were set at two to two, and with this, everyone knew they could count on an exciting finale.

Rudel stood opposite Aleist, waiting for the referee's signals. And as he waited, Aleist called over.

"Looks like someone's on fire... but even so, you're in quite a terrible shape over there. When I've finally gotten a stage to show off, I'm worried it'll just look like me bullying the weak."

In contrast to Aleist's cynicism, Rudel was a manifestation of seriousness itself. Right, Rudel had been waiting for this moment, and from the results up to now, he took Aleist's cynicism to be only natural... but he'd prove him wrong! With that on his mind, Rudel prepared his wooden sword.

As he focused his attention on the match, the pain in his body seemed to fade away.

Seeing Rudel like that, Aleist grumbled over his light response as he took a stance. Confirming both sides were ready, the referee gave the signal.



Watching from the noble visitor room, the royal family swallowed their breath at the fight unraveling before their eyes. This was no longer a contest between students of the fundamental curriculum. Between these two who could easily be compared to upperclassmen or even full-fledged knights, the hall itself held its breath.

(M-master!!! Why are you so beaten up! You're going to lose at this rate! My master's going to lose!!!)

Fina panicked left and right within. At the match, Aileen,

"Oh how wonderfully strong Aleist-sama must be!"

He saved her little sister, and that beautiful appearance. His form overlapping with the knight she once loved, to Aileen, Aleist was the ideal knight.

But the impression the queen held was something else entirely. Folding up the fan she used to cover her mouth, she leaned a bit forward to get a better look. Sensing the queen's growing interest in the match, the king tried asking for her impression.

"How about it? Do you see something you like?"

Leaving a space of silence, the queen answered the query.

"Yes, that boy called Rudel, the Arses House's legitimate heir is strong. But... how shall I put it, the Hardie House's Aleist is... quite light, I'd have to say."

The queen's eyes open wider than usual felt Aleist's strength as something light. The queen who would describe strength in such a way... from the start,

the queen had a liking for a strong man. In his youth, Albach had excelled in the sword, and it was accurate to say she fell for his skills. But forced to sit through a tournament of students-the fundamental curriculum even-their crude matches and untrained movements were unbearable to watch... she thought.

But in reality, starting with the Three Lords' sons, she was able to bear witness to some interesting fights. However...

"What a letdown...in the finals, what's more, the final match... one of them's in tatters before the match even begins, the other's strength has no weight to it. If that's how it's going to be, then yesterday's match between Rudel and Eunius was leagues better."

The Queen opened her fan once more. It seems she had lost interest.

"Then who do you think will win?"

On the king's nonchalant question, the queen gave an uninterested response.

"Well, the winner will be..."

Unnoticed by her parents, Fina expressionlessly...

(My fluffing! The fluffy kingdom of my dreams!!! Master!!! Hold on!!!)

Faithful to her desires to no end.



It was a harder match than Aleist could have imagined. In both swordplay and magic, Aleist thought he would come out on top, but Rudel wasn't losing. No, you could say he was winning. Rudel...

(Aleist's swordplay falls short of Eunius! His magic is nowhere close to Luecke! It isn't strength... Aleist lacks an overwhelming level of technique. If I'm to win, I've no choice but to stab into that flaw!)

Thinking that, he parried Aleist's attacks that pushed through with brute force and aimed for a counter. While Aleist had been pushing from the start of the match, he had failed to land a single hit. In contrast, suppressed as he was, Rudel's attacks landed accurately. Even so, the fact he was dragging his beaten body at a disadvantage hadn't changed.

In the hall, the voices in support of Aleist—who saved the princess—comprised the large majority. Receiving their encouragement, Aleist had started out in high spirits. But when it came down to it is, he was hard-pressed to win. What's more, the opponent was Rudel. That Rudel! Inept and prideful! Rudel who only existed as a hindrance!!!

“Why are you getting in my way... just fall already!”

Growing irritated, hastily used magic sword. His wooden sword was clad in flames, taking on the form of a blade made of fire itself. But its size was around twice that of a human. As Aleist swung it around, he launched an offense on Rudel.

“You! Someone like you! Should just disapeaaar!!!”

Horizontally, vertically, Aleist swung his sword... as he avoided it, Rudel also flowed magic into his blade. His special sword he had made to imitate magic sword. Rudel's magic sword of pure magic ran parallel to his wood sword, taking the shape of an orderly blade.

Its length wasn't anything great... but as Aleist's blade came down to consign Rudel to oblivion, even when he knew it wouldn't reach, Rudel swung his own sword. The magic surrounding it left the blade, but in exchange, Aleist's magic sword had been cut through.

“W-what's with that! I don't know such a move... how cowardly!”

The moment he tried to protest to the referee, Rudel closed in right to his side. He hurriedly lifted his sword to block, but perhaps both wooden swords had already reached their limits as they snapped the moment of impact.

“R-ref! I can't use my wooden sword. Temporary time ou...!”

The moment his sword snapped, Rudel instantly changed to close combat. Aleist used the abilities he had been granted... he dodged with his talent in martial arts, but he faltered against Rudel's difference of spirit. HE felt fear at Rudel's serious eyes.

(Why!? Why did it come to this!? This is my world, right... isn't this a world where I'm the lead role!!!?)

A high-level display of hand-to-hand combat unfolded between the two, but Aleist couldn't help but draw back. No matter how strong he was, in what he lost out in force of will, he could only find it in him to block. Unable to do anything but block, Aleist recalled his life before his reincarnation... the truth of the true Aleist's bullied life.

(Harassed day after day... I finally croaked in an accident, and reincarnated into the world of the game I loved! I even got cheats! I even got status! My face wasn't ugly! ... and yet, and yet, even here... you'll bully me here!!!)

As Aleist's face warped in fear, it was taken in by Rudel's fist. Blown back, Aleist crawled atop the ring. It was a scene no different to his past life.

(I'm scared! Scared! Scared! ... Am I going to be bullied again? By this stepping stone of a character...)

As Aleist wasn't getting to his feet, Rudel didn't pursue. He simply stood before him. The fearful Aleist wasn't even able to look at him.

Around, voices of encouragement for Aleist... he could hear jeers raining down on Rudel.

"Stand up! Why aren't you fighting me, Aleist!!!?"

Rudel's fist shook in his strong grip. Was it from anger... of emptiness, Rudel flared up. At his voice, Aleist felt even greater fear.

"I'm fine with losing! Just let me lose!!!"

On Aleist's voice, the referee tried to declare the match's end. But Rudel stopped it.

"Please stand! I've finally come all the way here... for what sake did I... I came here with my sights on you! I wanted to win! I wanted you to recognize me! And yet... Aleist, you're strong, aren't you!!?"

With those words, Aleist stood against Rudel. Rudel answered him, getting into a punching match once more. But this time's match was a clumsy one, a blind exchange of blows.

Unlike the high-level match up to now, it was practically a fight between children. But even that exchange was cheered on by the crowd.



“Which side is winning?”

(What pointless thing do you think you’re doing!? Stupid master!!! You just won, didn’t you!? Just take that guy down already, and take me off the fluffy paradise!!! ... Fluffy paradise? Fluffadise... huh? Not bad at all!!!! Fluffadise! Fluffadise!)

She expressionlessly got excited alone.

And her sister, the first princess,

“How barbaric... I hate that Arses House brat!”

And the king,

“Now this is quite a manly fight. Even so... with this, isn’t the Arses House child at a disadvantage?”

Her fan still opened, the queen’s expression didn’t change. She looked down over the ring on the ground. Perhaps convinced her predictions weren’t off the mark, she wouldn’t answer the king.

The headmaster looking over the royalty and his students gazed quietly over the match. They were both students of the academy... so he thought. If this match’s results became a good result for the both of them...



As the two exchanged blows, their footing turned unsteady. Their arms took large swings with barely any power behind them. Even in such a situation, the audience gather in the hall cheered on. A majority of them cheered Aleist on, but there were definitely some rooting for Rudel.

“Fall already... isn’t that enough!”

Aleist and Rudel made terrible faces. One of Aleist’s blows got him in the face. But Rudel didn’t go down, sending another blow in return. Neither of them would stand down.

But their limits were close. Rudel had been at his limit from the start. The only reason he still stood was his will not to give up. His drive for victory wasn’t just because he wanted to stay at the academy... for some reason, Rudel was fixated

on Aleist. The individual himself has noticed it. A sensation he had never felt before had become Rudel's will.

Wringing out his last power, Rudel clad his fist in a magic of wind... At the end of the end, running his magic dry, Rudel's fist came at Aleist to settle the match, knocking him off of his feet. As the hall swallowed its breath, the two of them collapsed Rudel who had run out of both stamina and magic, Aleist who had been pushed this far for the first time in any of his lives... after they lay immobile a while, some surrounding voices came to cheer them on.

"Stand up, Aleist-sama!!!"

"Don't lose to someone like him, Aleist-senpai!!"

"You can't lose to that idiot!!!"

The students rooting for Aleist mocked Rudel. Within all that, starting with Vargas, the upperclassmen started calling out to Rudel. In loud voices, they cheered him on.

"Don't lose, Rudel!!! Show them the results of your training every day!!!"

Luecke and Eunius cried out as well. Despite their injuries and Mana deficiency, they forced themselves to cry out! Millia's voice mingled in with theirs.

"I won't forgive you if you lose here, Rudel!!!"

"Stand up quickly! And you call yourself the man who beat us!!!?"

"Quite sleeping there and stand already!"

On the words of the heirs to the Three Lords', the surrounding classmates also sent words of encouragement. And the voices of Rudel's class weren't losing out.

"Stand up, Rudel!!!"

"You promised you'd be with us to the end!!!"

"Don't lose to the likes of Aleist!!!"

At the end, Izumi called out in a large voice!

"How long do you plan on sleeping there, Rudel!? Strongest... the strongest knight, you're going to be a Dragoon, right!!!?"

The collapsed Rudel tried to use his arms to raise his torso off the ground, but he instantly collapsed. He tried again and again... and right at that moment, a dragon passed over the grounds. For just that brief instant, a dragon's shadow passed over Rudel. And...

"That's right... I decided I'd definitely become a dragoon! For that sake, I can't always be on the losing end... I'm going to become strong! I decided I'll be the strongest dragoon who won't lose to anyone!!!"

Rudel rose with shaking feet. All the voices of support raised cries for joy. And Aleist didn't even try to stand. His shaking legs wouldn't listen to him. His heart had long recognized his loss, and no matter how high his abilities were, he was unable to stand.

"Goddammit..."

Aleist's wrung-out voice was drowned out by the cheers resounding through the hall. There, the referee declared the victor.

"Victor, Rudel Arses!!!"



In the noble visitor room, Fina expressionlessly stood from her seat. Making a gist with both hand, she raised them both to the sky to express her delight. She even let out her voice.

"Yeeeeesssssss!!! He wonnnnn!!!"

(Master woooonnnnn!!! You really are amazing, master! My heart skipped a beat there, you know!!! Even when there was nothing fluffy related, it skipped a beat!!!)

"W-what are you doing, Fina?"

The king looked at his daughter with worry. The queen dropped her fan, while the elder sister held her mouth open in surprise. Within all that, the headmaster clenched his fist triumphantly where no one could see.

On the ring visible from the room, the classmates gathering around the victor. They hurriedly tried to drag him off to the infirmary, while Rudel said something incomprehensible about how the match lasted until the closing ceremony, and

argued... It seems he said he wanted to stay to the end, but it was clear his hazy head wasn't thinking clearly.

(So you overcame it... how about Aleist-kun...)

The headmaster thought of Aleist, who had already been carried off. ◇

Aleist was carried off in a stretcher. He was told to lay down in the waiting room for a while, before he was left alone in the room. In that waiting room without anyone, Aleist wept.

"I... no matter where I go, I can't change."

To that room, a single classmate entered. Once Aleist realized it was the student who always tried to get involved with him, he made a displeased face. To that point, none of the other classmates had come. He was sure they were speaking ill of him. From his bullied experience, he had long-since realized.

But...

"Y-you were close, Aleist... I'm sure you'll win next time... I think."

His classmate hesitantly called over. Even now, he tried to become friends with Aleist. Should I refute those words or deprecate them... as he thought that, Aleist cried again.

(Ah, I see, so that's it. Why hadn't I noticed... I wanted a friend. The reason I came to love a game where everyone liked the main character, I'm sure it's because I wanted someone to like me... why couldn't I realize something as simple as that...)

"A-Aleist! Are you in pain!? I'll call the doctor over."

Seeing off his classmate's hurried rush for a doctor, Aleist listened to the cheers he could hear through the open door... will someone like me be able to be his friend... as Aleist thought over it, he cried and smiled.

Chapter 30: The Three Idiots and the King

The tournament ended without incident, and the injured... it was around the time the seriously injured Rudel, Luecke and Eunius were bedridden in the infirmary as per usual. Rudel's window seat you could already call his reserved spot, Luecke at the center, and Eunius's bed closest to the corridor.

In that infirmary room, Izumi distributed the fruits she had gotten quite good at pealing among them. Only Rudel's were cut to imitate the shape of a killer rabbit.

"It looks like a dragon's head, so I can't eat it... can I use it as decoration?"

"T-that's a killer rabbit! It's a bunny, so please, just eat it."

"Oh, I see, it's a bunny... then I guess I'll eat the bunny... no, but..."

Wounds all over his body, Rudel refused to eat the fruit slice Izumi had brought over to his mouth. As Luecke and Eunius watched over the two with sidelong glances, they seemed fed up at Rudel's exchange with Izumi that words couldn't describe. And outside the room, the individual who had come to eavesdrop...

(Bunny!!? He's eating a bunny girl? In a sexual way, right!? You eat them sexually, right master!? Let me in on the fun!!!)

... It was Fina. Following behind her were some high knight guards, the headmaster, and King Alabach himself. They had snuck in to congratulate Rudel for his class's victory.

This time's victory gave Rudel a high assessment among the royal family and academy... but by no means was this all sunshine and daisies for Rudel.



"Pardon my intrusion... the three of you look well... wait, what are you doing!? Stay at ease!"

As Albach casually entered the room, its four occupants got onto their knees... among them were three patients with serious injuries. The first to move was

Izumi, but following right after, Rudel moved his aching body onto the ground... his form caused Eunius' sense of competition to burn bright, and Luecke didn't want to be the only one left out so he followed suit.

As a result, the injured three kneeled before the king. His subordinate knights looked at him as if they wanted to say something. While he admired their courtesy to kneel despite injury, the three of them were the future Three Lords...

"Just lie down! You don't have to force yourselves to get on your knees!!!"

(Ah, father cried out... how interessssting!!!)

Fina expressionlessly enjoyed the situation, while the headmaster and knights sent the king some glances to get them to stop. In such a sickroom, the king's voice resounded...

Once everyone had calmed down, and the circumstance was one that allowed for conversation, Albach started up.

"Congratulations for your victory in this time's tournament. I never even imagined you would be so skilled... and so. I want you to officially succeed the Arses House. I got the general gist of things from Fina's letter. That you saved Fina, and that there was clear malice against you contained in the official reports..."

The king had taken a complete turn from the false reports to that point, handing Rudel a proper evaluation. At that, Izumi rejoiced, and both Luecke and Eunius were relieved. But Rudel alone was purely unsatisfied.

"No, it is true that I exposed the princess to danger, and it is true that both Luecke and Eunius here were dragged into a mess by me! Just my continued attendance of this academy is more than enough for me!"

To Rudel, the Three Lords... succeeding his archduke title would mean giving up on his dream of becoming a dragoon. When he had finally grown closer to his dreams, returning to being a simple heir wasn't Rudel's intent.

"No, no, with the exception of the reports, putting together numerous sources has led me to the conclusion you will make for a splendid archduke. Your grades are in the top ranks of the academy, and you're able to interact

with people regardless of race and status.”

In regards to the king’s praise, Rudel—not wanting to inherit any status—thought hard. At this rate, it would be difficult to become a dragoon... if the king ordered him to take over the position, then Rudel would have to get more involved with the territory than ever before. Once he left the academy, he would instantly have to stick his hands into internal affairs... his father would push busy work onto him, and he would have to go out into a high society he had never even experienced before.

Rudel didn’t have that sort of time. He had come all the way here to become a dragoon. To Rudel, an archduke title was useless.

“... I... have no interest in archduke status.”

“... Is that for the sake of your dream? Surely the dragoons are heroes among heroes within our lands, but if you become an archduke, then you’ll be able to save many more than you could from the standing of a single knight.”

On the king’s words, Rudel made a conflicted face.

“But even so, I do not want to give up on my dream!”

Rudel’s will didn’t change. The king was impressed by his strength of will, and he expected great things from the strength in his eyes. That’s precisely why he said it...

“Starting with the crown, to protect the country and its people. Such is the duty of a knight. From the very start, your answer was contradictory... I’ll put the archduke matter on hold. But as long as you can’t give an answer that satisfies me, I won’t let you become a dragoon, and your archduke rights will be confiscated... let’s end things here for today.”

With those words, Albach and his knights took their leave. After taking one look at Rudel’s brooding form, Fina followed her father and left the room.



After the king left, Rudel made for the roof. The infirmary... the roof of the facility you could already call a hospital, he had begged Izumi to take him there. Noon had gone by, the winds were blowing... the roof where the laundry made

a ruffling sound.

Bandages wrapped all over his body, wrapped so much Rudel could barely move the fingers on his hands. Sitting on the bench, he thought over the king's words. And sitting beside him, Izumi worried.

Izumi knew of Rudel's dream. She knew of his will to throw aside his people if it was for that dream... so having come this far, the words from the king put a stopper in his way. Izumi herself knew a large number of people would be saved if Rudel inherited the Arses territory, and she knew the king's words were just, but...

"Rudel... don't feel so down."

Even so, Izumi wanted to grant his dream. So she called out, but,

"Izumi, how am I supposed to talk my way out of this? I can think of a number of appropriate reasons, but... I can't hit on anything that hits the nail on the head."

"... Rudel? You plan on deceiving the king!?"

"Deceiving? Your words do me ill! I know what the king was trying to say... but in short I just have to save more people as a dragoon than I ever could as an archduke, right? I'll become a knight, become a dragoon, and save loads of people!"

His body covered with injuries, Rudel lacked any fragment of persuasive force. But finding his words reliable, Izumi smiled as she looked over him.

... Watching over the two of them from the shadows. Luecke, Eunius... and the headmaster. The three of them had been searching for the right time to call out to the depressed Rudel, but the boy himself was surprisingly... no, on top of being more energetic than they had anticipated, they learned he was trying to deceive the king.

"You can't just deceive him!"

Luecke quietly retorted.

"Tricking the king, eh... it all comes down to how he plans on doing it."

"Why do you look so amused, Eunius!? Rudel's trying to trick the king of our

nation. Let's stop him."

"No way. Of course I'm amused... and Rudel said it, didn't he? He'll save more people than he could as an archduke anyways."

While Eunius found enjoyment and Luecke began arguing, the headmaster seemed relieved as he saw Rudel's high spirits. And he was also relieved that the boy was thinking over what was to come after he became a dragoon.

(I'm glad he isn't losing his way...)



After that, Rudel wrote up a letter to the king. It was meant as an answer to the king's question, and as he read it, King Albach was put into quite a good mood.

'I will become a dragoon that can save many more people than I could as an archduke.'

That was Rudel's answer to the king.

Chapter 31: The Doll Princess' Rival

Rudel safely(?) advanced his classes, finished the fundamental curriculum and became a third year student. When the fundamental curriculum was complete, the concept of classes disappeared. Each individual student would choose their own direction, and pick out the classes that would be necessary to their futures. While the classes selected did change by personal ability, they were generally the same.

If you're aiming to be a knight, you must learn manners, and obtain practical skills in battle. There were other necessary fields, and a few criteria the hopefuls used to choose... in the academy where it cost money to take classes, the commoner students who wanted to get through at as low a cost as possible would choose the shortest route.

Using a period of one to three years, they would learn whatever the school had to offer. They would learn, but...



"I'm glad you three could make it... do you know why you were called here?"

Having become a fifth year-the final year a student could take-Vargas was chosen as a prefect for the boys' dorm. Alongside the students who had become prefects much like himself, he had called out the three... Rudel, Luecke and Eunius.

"No, I have no idea."

Rudel honestly didn't know.

"It's not a good feeling to be called out by an upperclassman... so why were we called?"

In regards to his upperclassmen, Luecke suddenly changed to a condescending tone.

"Did I do something... don't remember."

Eunius thought a bit, but couldn't think of anything.

Before the three of them, Vargas and the other fifth year prefects made conflicted faces. The prefects here all shared a common point. They were students who had chosen to become knights. What's more, proficient students aiming to rise to knight status from a commoner background.

In an average year, the young noble knight-hopefuls would be chosen as prefects. That was how it was supposed to be this year as well... but this year, the third year class contained the future Three Lords, Rudel and the others were the problem.

The factions of each lord had tried to send in prefects. But this year, the head of the problem children, Rudel had become a third year. In his third year, he would have more free time than he had in the fundamental curriculum. And naturally, the place he spent it would be the dorm.

Who would look after him?

That on their minds... the young nobles had stepped down from prefect positions. And Vargas, who got along well with Rudel, was selected. From Vargas' point of view, it was a right bother. After he had worked hard to become a knight, this time he was to keep a watch on Rudel. From an observer's spectacle, it was amusing enough, but getting involved led to extended headaches.

"I see... then I'll tell you. Starting with Luecke-sama. Your destructive actions in the magic practice field."

"? The teacher was the one who said to fire magic with the intent to blow the wall away, you know? I simply actualized that."

He had fired magic at the walls of the magic practice field. Those walls were sturdy magic-reinforced magic-resistant walls. And Luecke had destroyed them. The teacher never thought he'd actually be able to... by the way, Rudel had also broken them a few times practicing his special attacks.

And in the end, both Luecke and Rudel had managed to developed magic capable of blowing the facility away as a whole. Offensive magic requiring control technique far exceeding the mana put into it had left the facility in pieces... the theories alone had existed for a while, but as they weren't suited to real application, it was an offensive magic everyone had given up on... but Rudel

and Luecke had managed to complete it.

“Next! Eunius-sama, you’re in for the habitual breaking of curfew!”

“What are you talking about? I’m always in the academy at curfew. I haven’t broken a thing.”

“Huh? There’s a roll call at curfew, but is it fine as long as you’re at the academy? Then am I fine?”

“If you’re not there at rollcall, you’re breaking curfew!”

Vargas cried out at Eunius and Rudel. By the way, in regards to this problem, Rudel had also...

“... Finally, Rudel. You walking problem! On top of those previous two charges, various races have brought in complaints regarding the ruckus at the girls’ dorm.”

“Y-yeah. There definitely was an uproar at the girls’ dorm, but I think that one’s the princess’ fault. Having me pet all sorts of women, and getting all worked up on her own... come to think of it, isn’t that girl a bit too emotional?”

Vargas began explaining to Rudel, the biggest problem child of the bunch. The fact what Rudel had done to those demi-human girls at the girls’ dorm was sexual harassment. Just by touching them, a large number of women were...

While there was some fault in Rudel, the princess was the root of the problem. Saying she wanted to give her thanks, she called Rudel over to the girls’ dorm. Normally, anyone would suspect something there. But it was Rudel she was dealing with... he nonchalantly stopped by the dorm. From the start, he held not the slightest of indecent feelings.

But Fina was different! She was an explosion of indecency!!!

“According to Miss M of the white cat tribe, it’s your fault she can’t get married! Or so the report came in.”

“You mean Mii? But that was...”

“Wait a second Rudel! You... it can’t be you did that thing you did on the high knight? Why didn’t you call me!!? I also tried to learn it, but I’m not getting anywhere... teach me! Teach me the trick behind it!”

As Eunius drew close, Luecke held him back.

“Give it a rest! We’re not getting anywhere here!”

“Apart from her, a black cat, an elf... and finally a tiger. Just how did you manage to tame a girl of such a monstrous tribe? There have even been inquiries from men of the same tiger tribe. Honestly, it’s a pain! Day after day, large sweltering men come to us half-threatening us for the info!”

The other prefects who had become victims nodded in unison. Tiger tribe... Both men and women of the species possessed large builds exceeding two meters in height, a demi-human tribe known for their overwhelming might and ferocity. They were a tribe few in numbers, but the reason for that was quite hard to say. Tiger tribe women would only ever take to strong men.

They had no need for weaklings. For a tribe with such an unrelenting nature, Rudel was truly the messiah. If only petting is enough, then can even I hold the interest of a tiger girl, they thought... rotten as it was, he came from the Arses House of the Three Lords. So unable to ask even if they wanted, they had intruded on the prefects.

“Tiger tribe women are surprisingly cute, you know? I’m more scared of the black cat tribe... when she put on a collar and said, ‘please make me your slave for the rest of my life,’ I was seriously scared. If I didn’t beg Izumi to save me, I don’t know what I would have...”

“... You really are the worst! Sitting back and enjoying your monopoly on the market! Because of you, we’re being chased, threatened by sweltering demi-humans day in and day out... at least introduce me to someone next time!”

On Vargas’ real feelings mixed in with his complaint, Rudel tried consoling him still with no idea of what was going on.

“Don’t worry! I’m sure you’ll be able to do it too, Vargas.”

“I don’t want to be consoled in such an irresponsible way! It’s all your fault... wait a second? Did you just say something about the princess or... it couldn’t be you laid hands on the princess!!? If you did, then we won’t be getting off lightly either!!!”

As the prefects got desperate, Rudel scratched his face and denied it.

"I didn't do anything. Sophina-san, a high knight was stationed nearby, and it was impossible to touch her... all that happened was a confession."

"What!?"

"To that doll princess!?"

"Isn't that even worse!!?"

"Don't worry... it was rejected!"

Rudel answered full of confidence. As everyone present panicked, Rudel was thinking about heading back to his room. But unable to do so, he was restrained and forced to hear tales of what happened in the girls' dorm. And Vargas decided to prepare his ultimate anti-Rudel weapon.



While Rudel was restrained, the cause of all this, Fina felt irritated that Rudel wasn't coming over to the girls' dorm no matter how much time passed. Today was the day she would have him pass down that secret art... Sophina who had been stationed in her room as a guard kept a careful watch.

While Fina paced back and forth, Sophina offered a warning.

"Princess, you're being immodest. A member of royalty must always carry themselves boldly. And could you quit involving yourself with that idiot son of the Arses House?"

In regards to Sophina, who incessantly repeated the same thing,

"You're right. I'll consider it."

(What's she talking about? Just meeting him as my life's savior shouldn't be a problem, right? Does she think I'm not aware... acting like you're covering for me every time and taking the petting in my stead, there's a rumor among your subordinates you've taken to wearing sexy undergarments these days... at this point, only your mouth's reluctant, and your body's all ready.)

"P-princess... is Rudel-sama coming today? If so, then I should be off."

As Mii tried to flee from the room, Fina grabbed her tail. Gently pulling that tail close and pushing down her body.

"Don't run... it'll be alright."

(I won't let you get away, little kitten!!! Today's the day my technique takes you to paradise... I'll take you to fluffadise!!!)

As Fina was in a fever state, Rudel made his appearance. It was already late, but Izumi accompanied him to the princess' room.

"N-nyaaa!!!"

"So you're here, Rudel! I won't let you get close to the princess."

"It is a pleasure you were able to come, Rudel-sama... then let us get right to it."

While the three of them each gave a different response, Rudel spoke with a smile.

"Ah, I'm sorry, but my petting has been sealed. Izumi told me it was no good, so I decided not to do it again. But I can still pet dragons."

On those words, the three froze. With a smile, Rudel spoke of how there was no helping it if Izumi said it, and if Izumi was the one asking, then... The expressionless Fina,

(W-what do you think you're doing, black hair!!? Do you realize just what it is you've done!!? My fluffing... my dreams of fluffadise!!!!!!)

Chapter 32: The Young Man and the Boy

Having become a third year, Rudel had started taking classes of his own selection. But it was here that a problem came out. He was taking classes to become a knight, but young nobles already received a certain extent of education. For that sake, he found himself with more free time than the commoners.

At least in your student days, it's alright to have some fun. The nobles thought so as well... but to Rudel, he wanted to become a dragoon as soon as possible. He had to use the free time he had. And those with the top grades had some leisure in their credits, so he was needlessly bored.

"So you came to discuss with me on your future plans... but are you sure you're alright, Rudel-sama? Using up all your free periods on study and training."

Rudel had gone to discuss with Basyle. Even in the academy, Basyle was one abundant in true battle experience. There was nothing to be lost in talking it over with her! That was Rudel's decision, but... Basyle was wondering whether this was the right time to go do a job.

Job... they consisted of mercenary and guard work, government jobs where she'd sell her own ability for the right fee. Naturally, they were often dangerous, and one wrong step could spell life or death. But the current Rudel could handle most things.

"Do you have any good ideas? If possible, something I can only do now... once I graduate, I'll probably become quite busy..."

As Rudel lost himself in thought, Basyle brought the topic forward. Of course, about a job.

"In that case, would you like a nice jo... no, would you like to experience some battle? Not the sort of defense we did last year, I'll prepare some high difficulty subjugation training."

The inside of Basyle' head was filled with job details and rewards. Oblivious to

all of that, Rudel accepted with a smile.

“Can I leave it to you!? You’re a lifesaver, Basyle.”

... At Rudel’s words, she felt just a slight sense of guilt.



Basyle had come to a shop she knew well... the shop she sold a boar tusk a few years prior. After she made an enemy of the information dealers, she had come to rely on the old shopkeeper who had informed her of the danger. Now that she held a position of vassal to the Arses House-a position difficult to meddle with-Basyle could boldly make her way to the shop.

“Do I have a job for you? Last year’s guard job was already pushing it... and at this point, you don’t even need these jobs, do you?”

The old man carried out his appraisal job as he conversed with Basyle. As he carefully inspected all the items brought in, Basyle looked around at all the goods lining his store.

“It’s my employer’s request. So will you find me something? I’ll pay you some if you accept.”

“This isn’t a middleman ship, missy. But there is something I want to ask... the truth of last year’s incident with the princess. The information isn’t going around at all, so the info dealers are starving for it. Thinking there’s something ill at work behind it.”

Basyle could go in and out of the academy. Rather, she was a live-in worker. Those tidbits of info entered her hands at once. If her employer was completely involved in it, she’s even investigate herself.

“It isn’t something too interesting... though it did get a bit dicey when the Arses House’s succession rights were dragged into the mix. And I guess that’s about it? It feels like my employer’s younger brother and parents are twisting the truth around. And there’s a genius dragoon knight involved, making matters a bit complicated.”

Basyle easily divulged the details of the incident... but when it came to Rudel, she vaguely played things off and evaded the subject. Basyle was mindful of her

employer's personal information.

"When I thought it was something terrible... I guess that's just reality for you. So who's taking responsibility for it?"

"The Arses House is keeping silent. But I did hear little brother would be forcefully graduated in his second year, and stationed as a knight in the outskirts. I think it's a light punishment for a knight-hopeful who completely abandoned the princess, but... even so, as they're driving a famous noble to the borderland, the Arses House's reputation will be on the fall again."

Basyle didn't actually mind it too much. The reason being, because of Rudel, the Arses House's reputation was rising. Rudel... a future archduke recognized by the king, he had become a topic of discussion among the nobles. Within the intense factional disputes between the Three Lords' political forces, that was just how much a talented heir was valued.

"That idiot son of the Arses House is now a wonder child, eh... Never thought it would be tied in to that. No, I did catch wind of the rumors, to say the least."

"He's already a monster in battle. I'm no match for him..."

Basyle happily spoke on... but inside, she felt a bit lonely. It felt as if a little brother who had relied on her to that point was finally able to stand on his own...

"So is that also why the Dragoon Cattleya was removed from that scramble for promotion? It's become quite a topic that Cattleya-who never raised that big of a problem-was suddenly sent off to the outer reaches."

"That's a surprise. So the information's already spread?"

"Yeah, I'm sure there's some reason Cattleya was sent off to the country's outer reaches. But even so, it's all taking a hectic turn. It seems Gaia's increasing their troops on the border, and the information dealers were making a ruckus over increased monster activity... as things are, being sent to the borderland might make for a surprisingly heavy punishment."

As they carried on that conversation, the shopkeeper finished his work and took a memo of the information he had received from Basyle. He had surely written it to sell to an information dealer... Basyle thought, but paid no

particular mind.

"Come back next week for the work, I'll be able to find this and that before then. And I'll tell the dealers the information came from you... just because you're a servant of the Arses House, aren't you being a bit too careless? Nothing good comes from making light of them."

Hearing the shopkeeper's consideration, Basyle was surprised. She definitely was being careless, but... that current information held a decent value. She could've just sold it... seeing Basyle in thought, the shopkeeper spoke.

"I'm not troubled enough to have to take up a side job."

Hearing that, Basyle gave her thanks. At the end, she made sure to buy something before leaving the shop.



Having become a third year, Rudel got around to spending a majority of his time with Luecke and Eunius. It was forcefully decided that he would take territory management, and other courses necessary for an archduke. Taking them meant he would be together with the other eldest sons of the Three Lords.

The three of them put together half as a matter of course, and Izumi who was now away more than not. It happened when the four of them enjoyed a meal at the cafeteria

"You asked that lady to take up a job?"

Eunius ate his large serving of the lunch set as he showed interest in Rudel's story.

"If you're a student, then I get the feeling that endeavoring through your studies will be the safer option."

In contrast to Eunius' reaction, Luecke read a book as he put a damper on Rudel's actions. Sure enough, there were things you could only do as a student in school.

"But now is the only time we have, right? Once we graduate, things will get busy... This is just what Basyle said, but it's a good opportunity to see the

world."

Luecke felt some sense to those words, and putting his book down, he opted to hear out the story.

"That woman... is it alright for me to join in as well? If I don't keep a watch on that women, things to take a turn for the worse."

"That's fine, but are your classes alright, Izumi? If you're aiming to be a high knight, I'm pretty sure there are a lot of necessary courses.

"Erk, I-I'll do something about it!"

Looking at Rudel and Izumi, just go out already, Luecke and Eunius thought inside, but didn't put to mouth. As they carried out such a conversation, Eunius finished up his lunch and voiced his own will to join in.

"Then I'm in as well! It's a good opportunity, and it sounds fun!"

"... I'm surprised you can say that with your abysmal academics... well, I have some leisure in my classes, so I wouldn't mind tagging along."

While the four of them spoke, one of the students in the cafeteria raised a sound as he stood from his seat. He sent his gaze towards Rudel's group, but... his eyes were filled with ill intent.

Noticing that, the four looked at the students, around him his peers desperately tried to return him to his seat, telling him to calm down. But the standing student didn't move his gaze an inch.

"What a sight. When we desperately earned money and begged our parents to attend this academy... our high and mighty heir of the Arses House cares more for monster slaying than managing his land? I'm surprised you can do that regardless of all the people pained by your actions. No, perhaps you can do it through your blissful ignorance?"

As he spoke, his thorn-like something towards Rudel grew stronger. The standing boy was of brown hair and blue eyes, without any particular features that stood out. But that being the case, his facial features were in order. From the friends around him desperately trying to contain him, they couldn't think he was a bad person.

"Quit it Fritz! You're picking a fight you can't win. You're dealing with our upperclassmen of the Three Lord Houses!"

As the surrounding voices grew louder, Rudel chose to ignore the boy. It wasn't as if he didn't like him, or wasn't interested in him. The boy spoke the truth, and Rudel understood it was a problem. Rudel was aware he'd be hearing these things someday.

But it's precisely because he was aware, that he thought saying something to someone like this boy wouldn't get anything across. If he said he's become an archduke to save them, that held no credibility. If he turned defiant, even more so. And... Rudel's dream lay on a path in the polar opposite direction of the boy's words.

"Why not say something!? Don't you feel sorry for the people suffering because of you!!!?"

To the yelling boy, Luecke and Eunius stood and moved to say something back, but Rudel stopped them. Izumi tugged at Rudel's clothes, evidently worried he might cause a problem.

Whispering to Izumi it wouldn't be a problem, Rudel stood and looked at the boy. From his appearance, he could tell he wasn't a noble but a commoner. Surely his parents had gone to great pains to send him to this academy. Perhaps he was even a citizen of Arses territory.

In that case, I just have to become the bad guy. If the boy has someone to hate, I'm sure he'll try even harder, aim even higher... or so Rudel thought.

"I'm sorry... if I said that, would you forgive me? If your yelling will resolve the problem, then yell at me all you want, shout all you want. Once the fundamental curriculum ends, the third to fifth years have an individual entry tournament. If you can make it that far, I'll at least hear you out."

Saying that, Rudel left the cafeteria. Luecke and the others followed behind... and a little ways away, Aleist entered the cafeteria with his friend, but...

"W-what's with this heavy air!?"

That indescribable air enveloping the cafeteria left them both in surprise.

Chapter 33: The Young Man, the Black Eyed Woman, and the Lady

Having accepted an adventurer job, Rudel and co had come to a town a long distance from the academy. He had fulfilled a number of jobs, so this time he wanted to take up a higher difficulty level one in the border region. The further you got away from the capital, the more monsters you would find. This was in part from the effective range of knight brigades, but monsters would more often settle in places with lower human inhabitation.

That being the case, the distance from the capital caused their travel time to number in days. So Izumi was absent. As she was aiming to be a high knight from the start, Izumi had little free time to speak of. But how heartless it would be, to raise the difficulty yet decrease the number of fighters... following that thread of logic, Vargas was dragged along.

“... You know. I’m not even sure what I should say at this point.”

While Vargas was half in resignation, Eunius remained in high spirits. And as they headed for their destination point in the swaying carriage, Rudel and Luecke were reading books in the loading tray. By the way, Basyle was asleep.

“It’s rare to be able to experience monster slaying in your school days, Vargas.”

Rudel put a pause on his book and said it. Vargas let out a sigh as he answered.

“Hah, once I become a knight, I’ll have to take them on whether I like it or not... what’s more, ogre slaying? I have the urge to ask if you’re an idiot.”

This time’s job was to exterminate a lone ogre who had been frequently sighted around the village. If they were in large numbers, the dragoons or knight brigades would be mobilized, but... the fact it was independent, and that there hadn’t been any casualties put it low on the priority list.

And there were few adventurers capable of defeating ogres. Few, or rather, if they were that strong, they were better off quitting the adventurer trade to find

work with some wealthy noble like Basyle.

"A knight shouldn't complain. And as a knight, don't you have to pledge to protect the people?"

Luecke read on as he scolded Vargas. I definitely did take the oath! But when you think of how I'm spending my limited school life somewhere like here... it was only natural he was worried.

"More importantly, what are we doing about formation? I want the front line! Rather, I can't do anything else!"

In high tensions, Eunius was wholeheartedly looking forwards to battling an ogre. In the carriage, Basyle turned over in her sleep, putting her into an unladylike form... Vargas, Eunius and Luecke lent her an eye, but Rudel draped a blanket over her.

"... Just a bit... no, perhaps this trip isn't so bad."

Having found his drive to travel on, Vargas stopped his complaining. Meanwhile Eunius complained to Rudel that he look to see a little longer.



Just as the five set off on their job, there was a movement among the knight brigades. Cattleya had temporarily returned from the borderland to report. While being a dragoon, she was heralded as a genius, well thought of by the royal line. When such a girl was sent off to the outer reaches of the nation, the knights who didn't think so highly of her could boldly speak ill.

Her report over, Cattleya returned to her dragon, when some lower ranking knights called over.

"Been a while, 'prodigy'. Are you back for good?"

"Don't be stupid, there's no way Cattleya can come back. She picked a fight with the Three Lords, so she's off to the border for life."

"Oy, oy, it's amazing enough for someone to survive after picking a fight with the three lords! Right Mrs. Cattleya who presented her body?"

Ignoring those words, Cattleya hurried to her dragon... she couldn't stand it. To that point, she had held little interest in the dragoon status everyone

dreamed of. But expelled to the outskirts, through the harsh life she lived day after day, she had begun to yearn for her life in the capital.

And with her engagement to Rudel, the story had somehow been changed to one where she presented her body for her life to be spared. That only served to irritate her more.

In her irritation, Cattleya walked. A fellow dragoon called over... it was Lilim.

"It's been some time, Cattleya."

She gave a greeting no different than before, but Cattleya wouldn't allow it. Her emotions running wild, she found Lilim's unchanging air to be irritating.

(When I'm the more talented one! Why did she get a promotion while I was blasted off to the border... right. It's all that guy's fault! Rudel! If that guy wasn't there...!!!)

Even she didn't know why her emotions blazed to such a level. Cattleya offered Lilim some cynicism.

"What's wrong, 'Captain' Lilim? Calling out to someone sent off like me... you bragging? Since you were promoted after I left, you want to show it off?"

On Cattleya's blatant cynicism, Lilim was a little surprised. Lately, Cattleya had been acting strange. Especially when it came to Rudel. And she was sent off to the border. Her pride had been high from the start, so perhaps her feelings were just running wild. As she thought that, Lilim wasn't particularly irritated.

"I don't particularly mean to brag, I was simply curious how things were going on your side."

Feeling as if she was being ruled by something wicked, Cattleya let out words she never normally would say. On Lilim's secret she didn't want anyone to touch.

"It's the worst! They all say I offered my body to a man I don't even like! ... But perhaps I'm better off than you. Compared to the 'Black Eyed Woman' even run out on by her fiancé, I can get married whenever I want."

'Black Eyed Woman', That was Lilim's secret. The reason she wouldn't open her eyes was related to an elven characteristic where the quality of an

individual's magic brought an influence to their hair and eye color. Just as her younger sister Millia's hair was green, even among blood siblings, completely different colors could come out.

... And with Lilim's eyes, the entire surface was pitch black. The magic quality and quantity she possessed put her in the top ranks of the elves. It was the reason she was abandoned by her fiancé.

"... What did you just say?"

Lowering her face a bit, Lilim's clenched fist trembled. But Cattleya continued to land the finishing blow.

"I called you a black eyed woman, captain! Well, because of that, you have the fortune of avoiding a marriage to Rudel. No, perhaps that was your last chance."

On those words, Lilim forgot herself in anger. And this time, Lilim was ruled by something wicked... in contrast, Cattleya turned so level-headed it surprised even herself... and she understood. Just how terrible her actions were, and how terrible of a situation she had put herself in.

"Cattleya!!!!"

After that, the fight between two active dragoons unfolded.



Nearby a town close to the border, the soldiers of the Gaia Empire had disguised themselves and slipped in. Their mission:

'Testing the strengthened ogre'

That was their goal. For that sake, they had put out a job, and after testing it on adventurers, they would move onto combat tests with the knights of Courtois. That was their goal in infiltrating the enemy country.

And the one who happened to take that job was Basyle. Naturally, Rudel and the others were on board as well.

Long blond hair, wrapped round and round, a young girl wearing high class clothing was the captain of this experimental brigade. She hailed from a noble house of the empire, her name was Mies Liquorice. She boasted well-developed

features for her age, and gave off the feel of a young lady prone to airheadedness. There was a reason she was forcibly conducting battle tests of this strengthened ogre in an enemy country.

Relaxing in a high class inn of the town, she and her surrounding soldiers needed to urgently prepare a powerful weapon for the empire that was on the verge of collapsing from succession problems. To cross the border, she had filled out the proper paperwork, so that wasn't a crime.

She just thought she'd have Courtois carry out the tests... simply that and nothing more. But with complex power struggles involved, this mission was one intended to cut off Mies and the Liquorice House.

Unaware of all that, Mies arrogantly worked around her underlings-who were well aware of the situation-as she waited for the mission to commence.

"Are the adventurers not here yet? It's already been three days! I'm getting rather bored of this life in the countryside!"

In regards to their boss's willfulness, the subordinates pitied or scorned her within.

"I believe it will take a few more days... all the skilled fighters are gathered at the center of Courtois, after all."

"Hah, so I'm to wait on some mere adventurers... thinking of the number of days it'll take for a knight brigade to come out really brings you down."

Mies said as she lay herself down on her high-class sofa.

This mission that had dragged in Rudel's party, the affairs within the dragoons entwined, it made for a bit of a tangled mess. This was an event that wasn't in the scenario.

Chapter 34: Extra - Surpass Marty 1

This is a tale of when Rudel and the others were hospitalized after the end of the tournament. In that sickroom where the eldest sons of the Three Lords were pained even to move, Rudel, Luecke and Eunius were chatting as per usual.

“Rudel, why did you overlook Aleist back then? If he gets back on his feet, whether you can win next time is... don’t you think it would’ve been best if you let him drown in his talent?”

Luecke was talking about Aleist’s unsightly cowering, when Rudel stopped the referee from declaring victory. If he hadn’t done that, then Aleist would probably have just ruined himself. That’s what Luecke wanted to say, but Rudel’s answer was different.

“Back then... I wasn’t really thinking when I did it, so I’m somewhat troubled to answer... but thinking back, I think I wanted Aleist to get back on his feet. I mean...”



The Aleist in question, having suffered only light injuries from Rudel, had been discharged from the infirmary that day. But up to the day of his discharge, he couldn’t bring himself to drop by the room of the three lords. He wanted to apologize... but for what? And as he thought over such things, he found he was already discharged.

“Ah, it’s at times like these that I hate my own spinelessness... but if it’s just saying hi... no, but...”

Like that, Aleist loitered in front of the Three Lords’ sickroom, glared at by the guards. His fear of the guards was another reason he couldn’t enter the room.

There, Izumi came over for a visit. In her hand was a basket of fruit, and she offered a light greeting to the guards. The guards opened a path for her... at this point, her face was enough of a permit.

And naturally, Izumi had noticed Aleist.

“Hardie? What are you doing in front of this room?”

“Um, n-no! This is, well...”

(This might be the first time I’ve ever held a proper conversation with one of the romance event characters. But right now, she’s Rudel’s girlfriend, so... right! I’ll ask Izumi.)

Aleist approached Izumi and lowered his head.

“I want to enter the room, can I please accompany you!”

“... I don’t really mind, but you could’ve just gone in alone, right?”

Saying that, Izumi sent a glance at the guards to confirm it. Receiving that look, the guards gave a nod. Get-well visits from classmates were overlooked. In regards to Aleist, his identity was certain, so he had even less reason to worry.

“Thank you!”

Saying that, Aleist approached the door only to overhear Rudel’s conversation. He stopped his hand as it moved to open the door, while Izumi and the guards looked at him wondering what was going on.

From within the room.

‘Back then... I wasn’t really thinking when I did it, so I’m somewhat troubled to answer... but thinking back, I think I wanted Aleist to get back on his feet. I mean... when he has so much talent, wouldn’t that be a waste? And I want to fight Aleist when he’s strong.’

‘How fitting of you. Then I want to fight a strong Aleist too.’

‘Et tu Eunius? Aleist’s a musclehead and a crowd favorite... if it’s in the field of magic, perhaps I wouldn’t mind taking him on.’

Those words brought tears to Aleist’s eyes. He had looked down on him. He had thought of nothing more than how to use him. And yet... he felt just how large an existence the character called Rudel was. At the same time, Aleist realized how small of a human he was himself...

Izumi and the guards heard the words from the room and they could see Aleist’s expression. Izumi called over to him.

"Would you fight Rudel again? Next time, I'm sure you'll be satisfied with the result too... and thank you. You came to visit because you were worried about him, right?"

In response to Izumi's consoling, Aleist wiped away his tears and turned to leave without entering the room. To the doubtful looks that gathered, he let his tears flow as he spoke in a shaking voice.

"Right now, I'm too shameful... once I grow strong, once I'm not embarrassed of myself... I'll come again."

Izumi knew what she wanted to say, but hesitated over whether to say it or not. And as she watched over Aleist running off, she thought.

'They won't be hospitalized for that long, you know?'

... Perhaps Izumi had been dyed in Rudel's colors.



Safely discharged, Rudel earnestly took on the few remaining classes of his second year. It was around that time. He received a letter from Princess Fina saying she wanted to give her thanks, but the contents were strange.

I want to thank you, so come to my room in the girls' dorm. At night. Alone... the letter stated it quite bluntly. If a normal man received such a letter from the princess, then they'd likely get their hopes up. But this was Rudel.

"The girls' dorm doesn't allow men in, right? What's more, night... will I be alright with curfew?"

A few things off here and there, he tried to understand the problem and take action. That was Rudel. From the individual's point of view, not answering the princess' call would be a problem. So he acted in the accordance... but at that time, if he had consulted with someone... right, if only he consulted with Izumi, then many sacrifices could have been avoided.



The night of that day. Rudel had come to the girls' dorm as directed. He explained the circumstances to the female knights and soldiers on guard before the gates, and had them guide him to the princess' room. There was a reason

security was so lax. Not because Rudel was a son of the three lords, or because it was the princess' order.

The princess had her own team of high knight guards. The dorm guards weren't trusted... in a situation where there was no helping to think that, unknowingly turning away the princess' guest seemed idiotic. Just push the trouble onto those high knights! It was an action that came from such thoughts.

Rudel answered the princess' room. There were two high knights in front of the door, and one stationed inside. The one inside was Sophina, who he had encountered before. And another, he could see Mii hiding behind the princess' back.

"Welcome, it is a pleasure you could make it ma... Rudel-sama."
(You're not getting away, master.)

"? Yes, on this auspicious occasion I do... (Is it just me or is this princess kinda scary? Is she hiding something?)"

Perhaps her loungewear, Princess Fina wore clothing easy to move around with, giving her a different impression from the women he saw around the academy. But it would be troubling to say that tickled his heart as a man. On the contrary, Rudel found the princess' attire to be suspicious. Why such mobile clothing... does she need to be ready to move at a moment's notice? What else is there to do than sleep or read a book at night?

Irrelevant to Rudel's thoughts, Fina,

"The truth is... I've been in love with you from the moment you saved me.
Please go out with me!"

"I refuse!"

Rudel gave an immediate reply. Sophina and Mii who happened to be present stared dumbfounded at the exchange between Rudel and Fina. To confess before so many outsider, Fina was one thing, but there was also a problem with Rudel for instantly turning down a confession from royalty.

"I-is that so... then..."
(I thought he'd at least give a reason, but for him to shoot me down just like that... as expected of my master. If it weren't me, he'd be tried for treason. My

sister'd honestly try to kill him, so I'd prefer he be more careful, but that isn't the problem! Once they reject you once, humans are beings that become reluctant to reject a second, lesser request. And here's the main topic!)

"Please take me as your apprentice..."

"I refuse that too."

"..."

"..."

"..."

The princess' room fell silent. Fina cursed the royal tutor who taught her negotiation skills. Mii was surprised there was a noble who would decline the princess' request, while Sophina was mulling over whether she should scold the princess, or Rudel.

"C-could I ask your reasons?"

(Any stupid reason, and I'll have you sent off to the gallows! Even like this, that was the first confession of my life! When you reject me like... god, I think I'm going to cry. What's more, refusing to make me your apprentice... my dreams of fluffadise!!!)

"My reason... first, I already have two betrothed. If I left both of them aside to date the princess, I could never forgive myself as a person. And the princess' engagement is something decided by the upper brass of the country, so it's nothing that I can have a say in. As for the other matter, I am still much too immature, and it is too soon for me to take an apprentice."

In regards to the engagements, Rudel himself still didn't know what to do to sort out that confusion. But even so, he didn't want to take any rash actions... what's more, from Rudel's point of view, both his engagements were to dragoons he revered highly. He could never betray them.

"Is that so..."

(Those are some surprisingly decent reasons! I thought he'd give something more ridiculous... how impertinent, when you're supposed to be my master!)

Looking at the two of them, Sophina let out a sigh. And approaching Rudel, she scolded him.

"Rudel-dono, your current actions were too great a courtesy against a member of the royal line. I ask that you answer with a little more tact."

"My apologies (Despite being called the doll princess, I get the feeling this princess is ridiculously abundant in emotion... is that just my imagination?)"

While Sophina was scolding Rudel, Fina assumed the fetal position on her bed in disgrace. Mii approached her in worry. To cheer her up, she pat her on the head, but...

"..."

(Hrrrnngg, Mii, you're going to kill me from the cuteness!!! All I wanted was to take this little kitten to heaven... wait. Master said he's still immature... meaning something exists to surpass what he showed me before!? I must confirm this!!!)

"Rudel-sama, you are still immature? I was certain you already boasted considerable skill."

In order to confirm it, Fina interrupted Rudel's scolding. And to that question, Rudel.

"Yeah, there's someone I'm aiming for, but even now, I've yet to set foot into their domain..."

"Who is that?"

(There's an existence that surpasses even my master!? Who could that be!!!?)

"The author of How to Pet a Dragon, Marty Wolfgang. A dragoon of over a hundred years ago, he isn't around anymore. He was a great man who was never received the praise he deserved to the end!"

Rudel answered full of confidence. To Fina, rather than the book, the fact the individual was already gone was the problem.

"I see, that is unfortunate."

(A-a dragoon of a hundred years ago... why did you never praise him, damn bourgeoisie! If it were me, I'd have made him a hero of Courtois! I'd have made a country of fluffies!!! ... Huh? Wait, are dragons even fluffy to begin with? Well, whatever.)

"Rudel-sama... won't you accept my assistance in elevating your skills?"

And thus the curtain rose on the incident at the girls' dorm.

Chapter 35: Extra - Surpass Marty 2

“I can really pet you?”

“Yes. I won’t be able to understand unless I experience it myself.”

(Hurry it up! Get to the petting; pet me already!!! And then I shall lay hands on that sacred technique!)

In the princess’ room, the princess’ words created a bizarre air. For someone to tell him to pet them of their own accord, his little sister Lena was the only such person Rudel knew. Recalling his sister, he lightheartedly tried to pet her... but was stopped. It goes without saying the one who stopped him was high knight Sophina.

“Y-you can’t! Such indecent... Fina-sama, you should call it quits already!”

“Why is it no good, Sophina?”

“It’s just no good!”

“Then there is no helping it... in that case, I will give up on receiving a petting. But in my place, Sophina, you shall be pat.”

“Why did it come to that!?”

“That’s an order.”

(Get to it already. I must learn that technique at all costs!)

Sophina and Fina carried on that unproductive back and forth over whether there should be petting or not. Rudel didn’t just want to retract the hand he reached out to pet, so... he placed it on the head of the nearby Mii. At first, lightly and gently... receiving a surprise attack, Mii held the naïve notion that she would be fine at this level.

She regret it.

“Eh!? Wai... not there... mn, ah!”

His hand reaching out to her ears, his fingertips gently stroked them... Mii collapsed at the knees, letting out a sound as she fell to the floor. At that sound, Fina stopped her quarrel and looked over.

“I missed it... Sophina, it’s your turn.”

(It’s because you’re so noisy that I missed the sight of Mii being pet! Take some responsibility and get pet yourself!)

“Don’t joke around with me, pr-eek!”

As she tried to deny the order, Rudel circled around and started petting her ears. A high knight having her back taken by a student was in itself a failure. But as Rudel had no ill motives, filled with the pure intent to pet, Sophina never noticed. Sophina saw hell.

“Wow, this is amazing.”

(Is he generating magic on his fingertips? Using magic of that level will be difficult for me... six, no! If I push myself, then three years should be...)

“N-no! Don’t pet me so!”

As Sophia’s face reddened, her body twisting around, Fina stared in earnestly. To be honest, Sophina wasn’t fluffy so she had no interest in her. She was able to watch this act as a simple experiment.

It was there that Rudel became interested in his own limits. To that point, he had only used exactly what he had learned, but here he wanted to test technique he was still in the process of acquiring. That technique was...

“What beautiful hair... a lovely hue of deep purple. You must be looking after it well, Sophina-san, you’re...”

Verbal attacks. According to Marty Wolfgang, it is important to express your love with words. Even if there are things you cannot express in words, you must not neglect trying. As these words were to be directed at a dragon, the individual called Marty was likely an oddball of Rudel’s level.

But Rudel was dealing with a human, the human Sophina who wasn’t accustomed to these sorts of things. Whether she wanted to resist or accept it all, the individual herself no longer knew... her hips gave out like Mii as she slumped to the floor.

“Hah, hah... I-I’m not happy about...”

Sitting down, her body occasionally twitched as only her mouth put up a

resistance. As Rudel seriously took Sophina's reaction,

"So I still have a ways to go..."

He was vexed. But Fina thought quite differently.

"Well it all depends on practice, Rudel-sama."

(To think he was of this level... and the man who surpassed my master, Marty Wolfgang, just what heights could he have reached? What magnificent things could he have seen?)



After that, Rudel began commuting to the girls' dorm to practice. But the individual himself only came because there was no helping an order from the princess. If he needed to practice, it didn't particularly have to be at the girls' dorm.

But if a man began bringing his feet to the girls' dorm every day, of course, the other girls would notice. To make matters worse, an individual who should never have been informed ended up finding out. Antagonistic to the white cat tribe, a young lady of the black cat tribe, 'Ness' became privy of the rumors.

The reason she should never know... it was because Ness loved Mii. Not like, the other one... her love having surpassed the barrier of antagonistic tribes, and even the wall of gender, Ness was a young lady boasting long, black, silky hair. She carried a supple body, tall for a woman, sticking out where it should.

But she was off the boys' popularity scales. She was extremely cold to men. Only interested in girls, the fact that Rudel was frequenting the Princess' room and the fact that Mii was there were unbearable to her.

One time as she grew curious and passed by the princess' room... as ill fate would have it, Mii happened to rush out. And spotting Ness, Mii hid behind her back.

A step behind, the princess Fina leapt out, and even further back, Rudel walked his way out... Sophina was already incapable of standing, so she wasn't going anywhere.

"Don't run away, Mii."

(To run away at the good part, this is teasing play! My little kitten really is a mischievous one!!!)

Already in high tensions, Fina expressionlessly looked at the white cat hiding behind Ness. But for Ness, her beloved Mii was cowering behind her back, asking for help. There's no way she wouldn't save her! The moment she thought that-some indecent intent tinted in-her luck had run out.

"Give it a rest, princess! You're scaring my M... Mii, are you not!"

"Who are you?

(Well of course I know. I've already investigated all the fluffies, graduates included... rather, you just said 'My Mii', didn't you... what's with this cuckold feeling I'm getting!? You're arousing me, dammit!)

Behind in quite a few things, Fina sent a glance at Rudel and the high knights behind her... but Rudel didn't know what she was trying to say. Rather, he didn't want to know. Ever since he began to mingle with the princess, a sense of fear towards the girl had begun to bud within him.

"I'm Ness, a fourth year student. I'm going to return Mii to her room for the day, so... wait! Why are you surrounding me!? N-no, let my go!"

The high knights whispered apologies to her as they carried off Ness and Mii to the princess' room (den of evil).



Having gotten a new sacrifice on her hands, Princess Fina pinned Mii herself, while leaving Ness tied up with rope. Rudel still couldn't follow the situation. He was panicking over what he should do.

"Let me go!"

"That's no good. The crime of trying to cuck my Mii... I'll reward you for it. It's your turn master!"

(I've got my hands on a white and a black fluffy... isn't this the best? It's gone past best into crazy!!!)

"...? You want me to untie her?"

"... What are you talking about? You just have to pet her."

(Why does he still not understand come to far? Hurry up and give her a good fluffing!)

Hearing that, Rudel looked at Ness... as she glared at him with hate-filled eyes,
“I don’t want a man near me!”

At this point, she showed hate regardless of status or authority.

“It seems she doesn’t want to be touched.”

“Hah, master... if you manage to tame a woman who hates you... and get along with her, then you can climb to even greater heights.”

“I see!”

Convinced by Fina, Rudel freely wielded every technique in his possession to try to become friends with Ness. As a result...

“S-stop! Ah! M-my ears feel so go... not the tail!!!”

“What pretty hair... your tail is beautiful.”

And at the end, while she hadn’t stopped hating men, so came the birth of Black Cat Girl Ness who would snuggle up close to Rudel. The characteristic purring those of the beast tribe gave to show their good will resounded through Fina’s room... Rudel muttered.

“I get the feeling this is something else...”

Rudel’s question was irrelevant to Fina. That present scene was justice! Two cat girls with reddened faces collapsed on the floor of her room, the human Sophina lying around as something of a bonus.

(It’s come! My era has finally come!!!)

Chapter 36: Extra - Surpass Marty 3

After Rudel began commuting to the girls' dorm, the girls... particularly a certain portion of them began raising voices of disapproval. Unaware of all that, Rudel was on his way to answer the princess' call as per usual. Since he became a third year, he hadn't been able to go every day.

But even so, he was called around once per week, and at the worst times, the princess herself would say, "You can stay over for the night." Even Rudel would end up refraining from that one. Such visits continued, and Rudel's feet as he made for the girls' dorm grew heavier by the day.

"I get the feeling if I spent my time reading or training, I'd get better efficiency. But I'm being called by the princess, for argument's sake."

He complained to himself as he walked down the girls' dormitory corridor when...

"I smell a man... a noble at that."

"Boss! I'm telling you this is bad, that guy's a bigshot even among the nobles."
"Even for you, he's someone you shouldn't pick a fight with, boss!"

Wearing uniforms considerably tampered with... that no longer even held their original form, three girls stood in the way of Rudel's path. Among them, one was clearly glaring at Rudel. And she was large! Rudel wasn't short himself, but she stood more than just a head over him. Such a girl drew in close.

"Do you have some business with me? I'm in a bit of a hurry."

Unlike Eunius' elegant ferocity, the demi-human girl contained an especially wild savagery. And that was how it was supposed to be... among the demi-humans, the beast tribes, the girls were of the tiger tribe heralded as the strongest. What's more, they were Rudel's upperclassmen. One wrong step and even Rudel felt he would lose to them.

"Business? Of course I have some! There's no way it's good for a guy to be here! Now turn tail and get lost, noble boy!"

Looking down on him, and that yelling voice was enough for a gangster to feel

dread. Her intensity received a full score, but...

"More importantly, aren't those clothes against the rules? I recommend you stop dressing like that. Shortening your skirts, and... your bosom is, well..."

The tiger tribe women's attire, to Rudel who had many noble women around her, it looked striking, even causing his heart to speed up a tick.

"Where do you think you're looking brat!? If you want us to stop so bad, then call over a teacher or something."

As the girl they called boss burst into a grin, she grasped Rudel's lapels and lifted him up. But Rudel had been petting too much lately, and as a conditioned reflex, he reached for those encroaching tiger ears. The boss was surprised for just a moment, but she instantly snapped, tried to throw Rudel down, and... crumbled at the knees.

"Eh? Wait a sec... ond. W-what is this!?"

Her knees stuck to the ground, her thighs were lightly shaking. As the boss sat on the spot, Rudel felt some relief that his legs reached the ground. But seeing that, the boss' followers wouldn't let him off.

"What did you do to our boss, brat!!?"

The tiger tribe women leapt at him... there were no survivors.



"... How troublesome."

The ruckus having subsided, Rudel looked over the present state of the hallway as he thought over what to do. The tiger tribe girls' rooms were probably close, so he could just leave them there. He wanted to escort them, but when everyone was unconscious, that wasn't quite an option... and it hit him.

"I'll go ask Izumi!"

Rudel headed for Izumi's room. The unconscious tiger tribe girls were left behind. And as luck would have it...

"Good grief... where could my master be?"

(Keeping a princess waiting, he's a failure as a gentleman! Though I'm a failure of a lady! I want to quickly fluff up Mii and Ness...?)

As Fina walked down the hallway with her high knight guards, she came across the unconscious tiger tribe girls in the hall. She thought a bit and concluded this was Rudel's handiwork. The forms of these tiger girls closely resembled the form Mii was left in after a good petting.

"There's no helping master."

(The master's leftovers are to be eaten up by his disciple! ... crap, I'm so excited my drool is leaking out!)

Expressionlessly thinking over such things, Fina had the tiger tribe girls brought to her own room... and after that, she had a wonderful time fluffing them up.

"There's no one here, Rudel."

"Huh? That's strange... there were unconscious girls here just a moment ago..."

Izumi and Rudel who appeared later looked around, having found no one in the hall. And Izumi threw out the natural question.

"By the way, Rudel, why are you in the girls' dorm? What's more so naturally..."



The next day. As Rudel had been unable to go to the princess' room the previous night, he was called out again. Rudel headed to the girls' dorm with feelings of gloom. There, he found the tiger tribe girls wearing uniforms that upheld school regulation. Fidgeting a bit, they acted bashful from their unfamiliar attire.

The girls noticed Rudel and approached.

"W-we're really sorry about what happened yesterday! A-also... about yesterday..."

In regards to the women who were struggling with their words, Rudel thought they wanted him to keep quiet on their clothing from the other knight. That's

how he took it. Sure enough, it was some stimulating attire, and anyone would want to keep it a secret... Rudel seriously thought.

"Yeah, I'll keep quiet about it. Don't worry."

"...? N-no, not that!"

The tiger girl fidgeted as she tried to say something. But the princess' appointed time drew close. Saying he had an appointment, Rudel made off. And as he headed for the princess' room, Ness was there waiting for him... with a collar.



"Please make me your slave for the rest of my life."

Ness looked at Rudel with muddled upturned eyes. Her collar had a chain attached, what's more, she told him to make her his slave. A normal man would worry over whether to accept or not... but Rudel,

"Slavery has been abolished in Courtois. So the buying, selling, and possession of slaves is a crime."

An upfront, complete rejection.

But Ness didn't give up. Huddling her body to his, she pleaded in a cat's purring tone.

"It's a figure of speech. If you'll keep me for the rest of my life, I'll be satisfied."

"No, using the word keep for a demi-human is strange! ... H-huh? Are you listening to what I'm saying?"

Ness began unbuttoning Rudel to strip him down... there, Rudel grew scared and took flight. He ran off towards Izumi's room at full force.

"Save me, Izumi!"

From Rudel's footsteps down the hallway, Izumi knew he was there before he came in... but her roommate was surprised as he suddenly burst into the room.

"Did you do something again?"

"She wants to be my slave! The black cat says she wants to be my slave! I'm

going to become a criminal!"

On Rudel's answer she didn't quite get, Izumi had no idea what to do... so she arbitrarily opened the window and let him use it for his escape. To be blunt, Izumi was way too soft on Rudel. Normally, he had done enough to be presented to the dorm's prefects.



And having learned of those happenings, Fina.

"I see, so master isn't coming today either..."

(Damn, before I even noticed it, master cucked my Ness away! This is irritating and just a bit arousing!!! What should I do, at this rate all my fluffies will be taken away... I'm so aroused I can't help it. Should I seriously try to get my hands on master? If I do, I'll never be troubled with fluffing for the rest of my life. Huh? Master's from a Three Lords' House, so there's no problem with him as a partner!)

She got all worked up alone.

And the princess' guard Sophina and her best friend Mii looked a little disappointed that Rudel wasn't coming. Fina spoke.

"Well, I'll just place my hopes on tomorrow."

(We're all at the academy, so there shouldn't be a problem if I leave a little time. I'll be fluffing again tomorrow!!! As I thought, fluff is the first step to conquest!)

But Fina's wish was broken oh-so-easily by Izumi.